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# SOUL WINNING STORIES

BY

REV. LOUIS ALBERT BANKS, D.D.

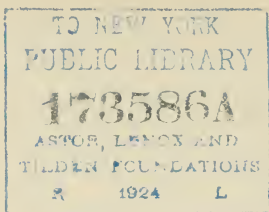
*Author of "Religious Life of  
Famous Americans"*



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SOUL WINNING STORIES  
—IC—  
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## Just a Word with the Reader.

PERSONALLY I have found life to be the most interesting thing in the world. Nothing has ever helped me so much as a source of fresh impulse and encouragement to increased endeavor as the story of success on the part of some one else. And surely that was the Master's way of encouraging his disciples for all time to come. The stories which Jesus told, and the stories which are related concerning the people whom he healed and who were converted under his ministry, are a constant source of power and inspiration to Christian people to-day. We get faith and courage to cast out devils from men now because of the picture we have of that redeemed man of Gadara whom Christ transformed and sent forth to tell to his friends the good news of salvation.

The stories in this book are my own. They are culled here and there from a great storehouse of such incidents with which God has blessed me in the course of my ministry. It has been a joy to write them, because the happiest memories I have are connected with incidents such as are narrated on these pages. I have written them, and now give them to the printer, sincerely hoping and praying that they may give impulse to many another to know the joy of winning souls.

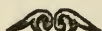
LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

New York City,





# CONTENTS.



	PAGE
PREFACE .....	5
I. PRELIMINARY SKIRMISHES .....	7
II. CAYUSE AND SADDLE-BAGS .....	25
III. THE CAPTURE OF THE STREET-CAR MAN.....	39
IV. HOW THE YOUNG BARTENDER WAS SAVED..	55
V. THE WINNING OF THE YOUNG MERCHANT AND HIS BRIDE .....	69
VI. A GROCER'S CLERK WHO BECAME A MIGHTY ARCHER FOR THE LORD.....	81
VII. HOW AN OREGON TOWN WAS CAPTURED.....	93
VIII. A SERVANT GIRL'S QUARTET.....	109
IX. AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT.....	123
X. WON THROUGH FRIENDSHIP .....	137
XI. AN OLD SAINT'S SURPRISE .....	149
XII. THE BOY IN THE DRY-GOODS BOX.....	165
XIII. WAYSIDE CONVERSIONS. ....	177
XIV. THE RAILROAD REVIVAL .....	189
XV. ON THE TRAIL OF A SOUL.....	201
XVI. A WAYSIDE CAPTURE .....	213



CHAPTER I  
PRELIMINARY SKIRMISHES



## CHAPTER I.

**I**T was my providential fortune to be born and brought up on the extreme frontier in Oregon and Washington. My father's log cabin stood within hearing distance of the roar of the breakers that beat against the Pacific Coast line. It was there in a little country college that I received my education, having been prepared by my mother, so that I entered the classes with full-grown men when but eleven years of age. At sixteen I went with my family to Eastern Washington, with all a college boy's dreams and hopes; but deep down underneath was a conscious undercurrent of conviction that my life work was to be found as a preacher of the Gospel and a winner of souls.

I had not reached my seventeenth year when the church of which I was then a member, the United Brethren, licensed me to preach, and at a camp-meeting on the little Touchet River, where the session of the annual Conference was being held, they set me to preach my first sermon. It was a Monday afternoon. The camp ground was in a beautiful grove, and a large platform, roofed over, with a board across the front, about waist high to the preacher, served as a pulpit. There was a large congregation, and I was extraordinarily nervous. I had written many essays and orations in school, but had made no written preparation for this sermon. Among the circle of preachers with whom I was acquainted in my boyhood written sermons were the one unpardonable sin in a minister. The result was that, though I had carefully thought out my sermon, I made a poor estimate of the length of time it would take me to deliver it. My

text was, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I went at it with all the force I had, and delivered my introduction, my firstly, secondly, and thirdly, and then, as I once heard Spurgeon say, I gave my "moving exhortations" and finished up. It was done in exactly eight minutes. I then quit, having said everything that I had prepared to say on the subject. In later years I have often congratulated myself on the fact that I stopped when I got done.

One amusing experience of that first sermon I can never forget. There was an old brother, with white beard and a bald head, sitting right in front, almost under the pulpit. He seemed greatly pleased at seeing so youthful a specimen in the pulpit. At that time I weighed but eighty-five pounds and was only five feet and a half high. My boyish appearance stirred the old man's soul, and on

the slightest provocation he burst forth in hallelujahs and amens. He gave them out with such an explosive force that, nervously strung up as I was, he made me start every time. But, poor old fellow, he got his "come-up-ance," as they used to say out there. There was a big brass candlestick, with a good chunk of candle left in it, standing on the board in front of me. It had been left over from the night before. Just as I got well going in my sermon, one of my gestures took that candlestick in its sweep and over it went, striking the man in the middle of an amen, and also in the middle of his bald head. It was a great dampener on the brother, and the sermon was so short that he did not recover himself in time to make any further encouraging remarks.

Very soon after receiving my license to preach I went off on an autumn preaching tour with an old man who had a license to exhort. We must have



made an interesting couple to lookers-on. He was as old as I was young. He had a long white beard that reached below his belt. He was not an educated man, except as education may be had with dealing with the hard experiences of life; but he was a good man. He loved God and he loved the souls of men. He had a tremendous voice and could be heard a long way, and his gift in prayer was something phenomenal. He is one of the few people I have known whose prayers seemed to be inspired of the Holy Ghost. We were together some three months, traveling nearly all the time on horseback, preaching almost every night, and on Sundays two or three times. The combination was one well calculated to draw large audiences. My extreme youth was a great attraction among the people, the little country newspaper spoke kindly about me, and the news spread everywhere, so that we usually spoke to large numbers of people for a country region.

The rapid tour, however, gave little opportunity for serious evangelistic work, upon which my heart was set, and on our return home in the early winter I was willing to disband, as the old man had wearied, and begin work by myself.

The region being sparsely settled and preachers scarce, their circuits covering hundreds of miles, the demand for any one who could preach the Gospel in simplicity and from a loving heart was very great.

After a week or two at home I decided to go to a community about a half day's ride from where my father lived and hold my first series of evangelistic meetings. I rode into the community by noon, went to the school-house, which was the only place of meeting in the neighborhood, saw the school-teacher, and announced that I would preach there that night at "early candle lighting." Then I rode on around the outlying sections of the community, visiting houses that would

not be likely to hear the word from the school-house, telling them about the meeting and inviting them to attend that evening. This was the universal custom, as there were no churches and but few Christian people. The preacher was literally a seeker after souls, a shepherd gathering up a scattered flock, most of whom were as wild as the wolves. At noon I had stopped and made friends with a family who gladly gave me my dinner, and in the evening had taken my supper at the last house where I called before dark. The people were hospitable, the country was new, preachers were not often seen, and the humblest of them were always made welcome, except at the most churlish firesides.

I went early to the school-house that night and watched the people come in. Only one man was earlier than I, and he was building a wood fire in the stove. He had brought with him one candle, which he put in the neck of a bottle and

stood it on the school-teacher's desk, which served for a pulpit. But soon the people began to come, in wagons and on horseback, and as nearly every family brought a candle, they were soon throwing out their light on the bare walls of the school-house and on the live and interesting faces of men, women and children who filled the little room to overflowing.

The school-teacher led the singing, and we sang the old hymns which everybody knew (and knows), for I do not suppose there were more than two copies of any one hymn-book in that whole neighborhood. I read the Scriptures and prayed and preached—all in less than half an hour. It was many months after that before I ever preached longer than fifteen minutes. But I preached on great themes: Death, Hell, Heaven, the Judgment, the Atonement, Pardon, Repentance, Salvation through Faith—these were the themes, sharply defined,

presented without doubt and a boyish love and enthusiasm, which, blessed by the grace of God, often seemed to bear everything before them. I never preached in those days without inviting immediate confession of Christ. But though on that first evening the people had heard the Word with attention, and some even with emotion, there was no response, and I was correspondingly discouraged.

I went home with one of the families present, and remained over night, having announced a meeting for the next night. The next day I spent riding still farther afield, spreading the news of the meeting and coming back to preach at night. A still larger crowd was present. Indeed, every foot of standing room was taken, and great interest and a deep spirit of conviction seemed to pervade the audience; but not a move of any kind could I secure.

I was at my wits' end, and almost

ready to believe that my call to the ministry had been revoked. That night, however, I went home with a new family, where the woman of the house was a Christian. We were scarcely seated in the house before she said, "Now, my boy, you must not feel that it is your fault that the meetings are not going better, for I know exactly where the trouble lies." I was awake in a minute when she said that. Then she told me that the two wealthiest men in the community, the men having the largest and best stocked ranches and the most influence, had been in a feud for a long time and would not speak to one another. To make it worse, one of these men was the son-in-law of the other, and the family quarrel had been very intense and bitter. And what was still more serious, from my standpoint, both families were professed Christians. This bitter feud had been a scandal and a shame to Christianity in the neighborhood and lay like a giant

boulder across my path in trying to win the people to Christ. If Christians were going to act in that way, the rest of the neighborhood did not want to be Christians.

This was an eye-opener. But, hard as was the problem presented, it greatly relieved my mind. The next morning, after prayerful consideration, and pledging this good woman to pray for me, I set out to heal that feud.

I have never seen a person more astonished than was this old man when I went to him and laid my plea before him. I told him that he was standing in the way of the Holy Spirit's winning souls in that community; that, as he was the older man, he could afford to be generous. But he was proud and hard and would not yield.

Then I went to the younger man and put it to him that men and women were living there without hope of heaven, and he was making Christ seem ugly to them,

and that, being the younger man, it was the right thing for him, out of consideration for his father-in-law's age, to go more than half way toward a reconciliation.

The houses were only three-quarters of a mile apart, and I kept the road hot all day. Early in the day I found that the mother and the daughter were very tender toward each other, and that their hearts were with me in my attempt to make peace. I had supper with the elder family, and, finally, as I was going away to the evening service, the old man agreed to announce a morning service at eleven o'clock the next day at his house, saying that if his son-in-law would come to the service, he would forgive him and make peace.

Of course this was a great start toward victory, and I went before the crowd in the school-house in triumphant spirit; but there was still no response to my passionately earnest appeal to them to become Christians. But at the close of



the service, when I announced the morning service at the home of the old man, there was great excitement. People turned to each other with looks of greatest interest. Everybody seemed to feel that something was going to happen. So great was this feeling that the next day, though the service was at such an early hour, work was dropped, and the big living-room and dining-room and the adjoining bedroom of the old-fashioned farmhouse were crowded with people. I had a hard time that morning, getting the young man to give in sufficiently to come; but his wife helped me, and at last he yielded. When he arrived, with his family, just before the meeting began, the excitement among the neighbors present was up to fever heat. I have preached to many an audience since, sometimes when there were many thousands of people listening, but I have never more keenly felt the atmosphere of an audience than I did that day.

I preached a short, tender sermon, about twelve minutes long, and then announced that we would have a brief testimony meeting, and that if there were any present who would like to say a few words about their own religious experience, or express a purpose to serve Christ more faithfully in the future, I would be glad to hear from them. All was silent for two or three minutes. It seemed like ten minutes to me. The old man and the young man were waiting against each other; but, finally, the old man rose to his feet. He was a fine looking man, of venerable appearance. As he stood and looked around on his neighbors his lips trembled and his eyes filled with tears. At last he said brokenly, "Neighbors, I have not been doing my duty to God. I have not lived in my family as I ought to have lived, and I fear my influence in the neighborhood has been to make people doubt Christ. My anger hid it from me until—" and he

turned to me—"God sent this young man to show me my sin. But my anger is all gone now, and if —— will forgive me, we will have peace and do our duty." As the old man finished he turned toward his son-in-law and stretched out his arms. Everybody was crying. The young man's heart was melted, and a moment later he was in the old man's embrace. The mother and daughter found each other soon, and a spirit of reconciliation and love filled the air.

You may well believe that that scene cleared the atmosphere, and that night, in the little school-house, seven people responded to my invitation and tearfully sought and found hope in Jesus Christ. In the days that followed the revival influence swept through the entire community, and in a large number of families father and mother and all the children were converted to Christ. Under God, it was the healing of the feud that did it.



CHAPTER II  
CAYUSE AND SADDLE-BAGS



## CHAPTER II.

THE minister who has never ridden a Far Western circuit has lost an interesting chapter from the possibilities of his experience. My first regular circuit riding was done as an assistant pastor, or, rather, "assistant preacher-in-charge," for that was the term used, to my uncle, who was "preacher-in-chief." I was with him the six winter months, for in the Willamette Valley there are only two seasons, the summer and the winter. The summer is comparatively dry and the winter is nearly always very wet. Our circuit reached from the city of Portland eastward as far as settlements had gone into the Cascade Mountains, and from the Columbia River on one side across two

counties to the south. The country was heavily timbered, for the most part flat, and the roads muddy, and the lot of a circuit-rider such as to try his soul and develop in him many Christian graces.

I had no horse, and a benevolent brother on the circuit offered to let me have one for his keep. I think his benevolence was mixed with a desire to be rid of the horse for awhile and to get him broken. He was a wild, vicious beast, with no sense, and led me a terrible life. I remember one forenoon I had a long ride to make to reach a log school-house where I was to preach at eleven o'clock. Rain had been pouring for many days and nights, and the streams were overflowing their banks everywhere. Ordinary brooks had become small rivers. And to make it worse the road was new to me, and I could only plunge ahead and take things as I found them. I came upon a stream which usually was a little affair, but the



bridge had been washed away and the water had spread out for a long distance on either side. The water was dirty, and there was no telling how deep it was until you tried it. At the first lunge of my horse his head went out of sight and the water washed through my saddle. Up he came, gave a terrific snort, and, leaping as far as he could, went down again to the bottom. This time the water struck under my armpits. Up again came the horse, snorting wildly, and with another fearful lunge he went onward and then down, again hugging the bottom. This time the water gurgled around my shirt collar, and I held my chin up to keep it out of my mouth. Luckily, we had reached the lowest point, and two or three lunges more brought us into wading depth. The horse had no idea of swimming. If the stream had been wide enough he would have drowned himself. As it was, he had given me a very uncomfortable

preparation for a morning's discourse. I could not stop; I had eight miles yet to ride, and went on as fast as the horse could gallop. When I reached the little school-house in the big woods I found that, notwithstanding the rain, it was filled with people, some of them having come on foot several miles over trails in order not to miss the one chance they had once a month of hearing the Gospel. I went in and stood by the stove a moment, and then with my wet clothes steaming I conducted the services and preached as best I could. I had some dinner in a humble home near by and rode eighteen miles farther that afternoon to preach again that night.

As the winter deepened we began to hold evangelistic meetings at the leading points on the circuit. We were usually alone in these meetings, the circuit being so large that we followed each other alternately around. We often began a meeting on Saturday night and would

continue over until about Wednesday of the next week. On more than one occasion that winter a whole neighborhood was tremendously shaken by these simple straight-forward services. It was in those country places that I learned the secret which has been one of my greatest sources of power ever since, and that is, if you want to get at a man's real heart and break down his defences in your effort to win him to Christ, you must get him alone by himself. It is a great waste of time to talk to a man personally about his own salvation in the presence of other people, unless he has already decided and needs your help, and even then it is better to get him alone. That winter I also learned that if a man showed deep interest in the meeting, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian, it was not well to let the next day go by without having a personal conversation with him. If I could manage it I got an invitation to be at his

home, and that night, in front of the big fireplace, when all the rest of the house were asleep, or the next morning out among the stock or in the field or the pasture, I found the opportunity to open the gate straight into his heart, and many a man was converted in those heart-searching conversations and the tender prayer that followed later.

At the close of the six months in this field where I had been an assistant a brother died who had been in charge of a large circuit a hundred miles or more south of us, and the presiding elder put me in charge for the rest of the year. I arrived on the scene in the early spring, when the mud was deep and heavy, as it is in a country full of swales about the time it begins to dry up. I had received only a hundred dollars of salary for the last half year's work and was still without a horse. A good brother came to the front with a little pony. It was a very gentle, nice pony, but its legs were

so short that when we got into a very bad mud hole it would stick, and I would have to get off and walk. The months on that circuit, however, were months of great enjoyment. It was an old and famous circuit, with a great many strong Christians among both the men and the women, who had rare spiritual graces, and my association with them will never be forgotten. The time of year for evangelistic services had passed before my coming to this circuit, as the farmers were plowing and sowing, and it was almost impossible to get them out to service on a week evening.

Everything was looking forward toward the camp-meeting. I heard wonderful stories of the great times they had known on the old camp-ground, and the camp-meeting that year was no exception. The people came from a circuit of forty to fifty miles around. There were no cottages or buildings made of timber of any kind, but the

people brought their canvas tents, and by the middle of the week it looked like a white city. Scores and scores of tents went up in long rows on every side. The whole grove and all the people in it were given up to spiritual things. Nobody thought about entertainments or amusements. They had come there to worship God, and all day and part of the night was given up to it. The first thing that would be heard in the morning would be the voice of some one singing hymns, and then, as the people gathered for morning prayers, the sound of singing and prayer would rise from a hundred tents. I have never seen anything else like it on earth; but it was as beautiful and glorious as it was unique.

A portion of ground immediately in front of the "preacher's stand," sufficient to seat about one hundred and fifty people, and fenced in by poles nailed on to the sides of trees, was called the altar. This, as well as the region

beyond it, was seated with rude benches without backs. The ground was covered with fresh straw to keep it from becoming too dusty. At eight o'clock there was a prayer and song and praise service. At nine o'clock there was a sermon. At eleven o'clock there was another sermon. At about two-thirty there was another sermon, and at four o'clock there were what they called "brush prayer meetings," where leading men among the laymen would invite their brethren and any that were seeking Christ, and any others who were still holding out against the Lord, to go with them into the woods for a quiet prayer meeting. The women held a meeting of their own for women only, with the same purpose in view. I have known these meetings to be a most powerful agency in the winning of souls. Again at night there was a sermon. Of course, after every one of these sermons there was an after service. The sermons were

often informal and "scattering," but they were all earnest and Scriptural and all devoted to the one great purpose of winning men to Christ then and there. Every sermon closed with a direct appeal for the sinner then present to cease his rebellion against God and surrender to his Lord.

The exhorter came next. Those were the days of exhorters. Whenever as many as two preachers were together at any evangelistic meeting during my younger ministry, it was understood that one would preach and the other exhort. Multitudes of men in our great pulpits whose ministry is not being blessed by the conversion of souls would become great soul-winners if they could only have a year's training as exhorters. At this great camp-meeting which I have been describing the exhorters followed every sermon all day long. It is quite an art to get up after a man has ceased preaching, catch the spirit of the meeting



where he has left it, and carry it right on with well chosen words or striking illustrations, intensifying it as you go, until the time for action has come. The invitations given were for immediate decision for Christ. The front benches were cleared, and the people who would make a public confession of their purpose to surrender to the Lord were invited to come and kneel there. Then preachers and laymen sought out their friends and acquaintances through the audience and with tears and entreaties persuaded them to come to Christ.

I have seen many great revivals under a great variety of circumstances; but I have never seen any place where the presence of Almighty God was more apparent, where the conviction of sin seemed to be a more real and terrible thing, where the members of the church were more passionately in earnest for the salvation of men; nor have I ever seen more marvelous surrenders of the

human will to God, or clearer and **brighter** instances of happy and joyous conversions that issued into the steadfast and holy life, than I witnessed on the old Brownsville camp-ground in Oregon.

CHAPTER III  
THE CAPTURE OF THE  
STREET-CAR MAN



### CHAPTER III.

IT was in the days when the horse-car was in all its glory, shortly before the electric trolley came on the scene and sent the horses back to the farms. It was my first pastorate in an Eastern city, and I had the care of a small church that was situated in a populous suburb. The general location was excellent, but one thing greatly annoyed my congregation; this was the existence of a great horse-car stable just across the street from us, where the cars were coming in and going out constantly to make the changes of horses and men. Whenever anything nice was said about the church by one of our people to another, or by any outsider to them, there was always that

reservation, "If only that old street-car barn were out of the way." As Mordecai to Haman when he wouldn't bow to him, so that old barn took the edge off all our joys.

This old street-car barn was annoying in many ways. In the first place, it did not smell good; in the second place, it was very noisy; and finally, and the most important, there was always a large group of from twenty to fifty horse-car conductors and drivers off duty, who were hanging around the doors of this barn. They were an unusually wicked, blasphemous lot of men, and they naturally attracted other men of the same ilk, and it became notorious as a place that was noisy and vulgar, where women were stared at and remarked upon. Every decent woman took the other side of the street and hurried past when she had to go around that corner.

After I had been pastor of the little church for a few months, it was borne in

upon me that something must be done to change the condition at that car-barn corner. After thinking it over and praying about it a good deal, I called my official board together one Sunday morning, after the sermon, and told them that I believed our church had a duty in relation to that horse-car barn. I said to them, "You have tried to get away from the place and you have tried to get them to move away for a long time, and nothing has ever come of it. Now my judgment is that it is all providential. God has put us here to save that crowd. This is the duty that is at our door. I want you to back me up in a series of revival meetings. We will not tell people so, but the great object of all will be the saving of the conductors and drivers who have their headquarters at that horse-car barn."

They were greatly astonished. Most of them thought I was optimistic beyond reason, and that we would never get any

of them to come to the meetings. Two or three, however, took fire at the earnestness of my own heart, and after talking it all over they all agreed that it was worth trying, and we set to work. For six weeks we held meetings day and night. We had preaching every evening, but I soon found that the best hour for the horse-car men was about nine o'clock in the morning when the morning rush was over. More men were at leisure between that and eleven than at any other time. So I added another meeting, especially for them at that hour.

Well, the Lord blessed our labors. We parceled them out. I hunted the church through to find out who in the church had personal acquaintance or influence with individual drivers and conductors, and I set everybody praying for their own acquaintances among these men, and urged each one to try to answer his own prayers by seeking them out and bringing them to the meetings. It was



not long before this work began to tell, and, one after another, they were being converted.

From the very first I found that the greatest obstacle to a successful work of grace among the men at the barn was in the person of the car-starter. He was a man past middle age, and a man of great force of character. He was sharp and witty, and his keen tongue could always raise a laugh or bring the blood, if, as often, he chose to use it as a lash. With all this, he was a big-hearted man in many ways, and very popular among the drivers and conductors. But he hated God, he hated the church, he hated Christians, and above everything else he hated Christian ministers. There was nothing his sharp tongue could say that was bitter enough and mean enough if it could raise the laugh against a preacher and show his contempt for him. I very soon discovered that many of the men were holding back for fear of running

the gauntlet of his tongue. When I found this out, I went straight to him and told him so, thinking I might sober him with a sense of responsibility in the matter; but he contemptuously cursed me and told me to mind my own business. I quietly told him that I should pray God to open his eyes to his wickedness, and went away.

I told some of the people in the church about it, and we covenanted together to pray daily for the starter's salvation. Every day, now, I was about the barn, inviting men to the meetings, encouraging some who had already started, specially working with others, and, incidentally, coming in contact with the starter. Every day there was some bitter, vulgar sneer or wicked oath hurled at me, and when assured that I was praying for him he would almost grind his teeth in rage. This matter went on for some three weeks, when one night, just as I was sitting down at the table for my

supper, the door-bell rang, and, on opening it, there stood the car-starter's wife. She was greatly excited. "Oh," said she, "I wish you would come to our house right away. My husband is in a terrible condition."

"Why, what is the matter?" I inquired. I supposed there had been some accident about the barn.

"Oh!" she replied, "he is in an awful condition. I left him walking the floor, and wringing his hands in a perfect agony. He thinks he is going to be lost. He says he has committed the unpardonable sin and there is no hope for him."

I shall never forget the thrill of joy that ran through me as the woman told me that story. Involuntarily I exclaimed, with great fervor, "Thank God!"

She looked at me almost dazed, and inquired, "What do you mean?"

"I mean," was my reply, "that this is the beginning of better times for your

husband. If he is feeling like that, I am sure I can do him good."

"Well," she said, "if you can do him good, he surely needs it, and that very soon."

I forgot all about my supper, and throwing on my hat and overcoat hurried with her to her home. When we went in, I found she had not overstated the case as to the starter's feelings. He was in the deepest anguish. Despair was written on every line of his face. The Holy Spirit had opened up before his gaze the awful hell that was in his heart. He seemed utterly without hope. As soon as he saw me he cried, "There is no hope for me! How wicked I have been! And I knew better, too. But I have hated God and I have hated you. I have said every mean thing about you that I could lay my tongue to. And I have abused the members of the church; I have picked flaws in them. I have made fun of every man that has started

to be a Christian. I have done all I could to keep them back, and I fear some of them will be lost because of what I have said to them."

As soon as I could get a word in I said to him, "Remember, it is not your sin, it is not your wickedness, that is in the way of your salvation."

He looked at me astonished. "What is in the way, then?"

I replied, "The only thing that is in the way is your unwillingness to ask Christ to forgive you, and to accept his forgiveness."

That was a new idea to him. Then I told him the old story of the thief on the cross, and the other story of that poor, demon-possessed man at Gadara. I could see that the last one took hold of him. He seemed to feel that the man who had a whole legion of devils in him, all of whom were cast out by the power of Jesus, was a case that gave hope for him. After we had talked perhaps ten

minutes, we kneeled down to pray. I never heard a man pray with such abandon for himself. I thought all the neighbors on the street would hear. He cried out to God. He did not mince matters in telling the Lord about his sins. Finally his heart broke. The tears came, and in that flood of tears his faith caught sight of the Christ who died for him. His heavy burden rolled off like the load from the shoulders of Bunyan's pilgrim at the cross. He rose up from his knees with a new look in his face and a new joy in his heart.

He said he must go at once to his work at the barn, as he was due there in a few minutes; but I was so anxious to thoroughly intrench him in his new life that I took him across with me to the church, where I knew a little prayer-meeting was going on, and he went in with me, and there gave his first testimony for the Lord.

The car-starter's conversion created

great excitement in the community. People flocked to the meetings, and the revival received a new impetus. Over two hundred were hopefully converted, and over a hundred and fifty were added to my church. But that which pleased me especially was that fifty of my new church members were made up of twenty-five street-car men and their wives.

From that day till this, now a good many years, the car-starter has lived a Christian life. His influence everywhere has been for Christ. He has led many to the Lord through the purity of his life, the sweetness of his spirit, and the holy boldness with which he bears his testimony to the power of Christ to forgive sins.

One of the sweetest compensations for the self-sacrifice which is often demanded of a Christian minister is found in the love and devotion of the men and women who are won to Christ through his efforts. Some years after the car-

starter's conversion, lecturing one night in a far-distant State, I found him in my audience. Nothing would do but that I must go home with him for the night. I had to take a train at half-past two in the morning, but he assured me that he could wake at any hour, and there would be no danger of my getting left. When he aroused me in the morning, and I went down to find a cup of hot coffee waiting for me, something in the car-starter's face convinced me that he had not slept.

"Look here," said I, "you have been sitting up all night. I can see by your eyes that you have not been asleep. You are too old a man to do a thing like that."

I shall never forget the answer. His lip quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and as the great drops rolled over his cheeks, he said, "Ah, you do not know what a joy it is for me to do something for you. If I were to sit up all night,



once a week, as long as I live, it would be nothing compared to what you have done for me."

I have seldom had anything touch me more deeply than those words. I thought of what Paul said to the Galatians whom he had won to Christ, in recognizing their love for him: "I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." Many times since that night, when I have been tempted to discouragement, and wondered if the hard work was worth while, I have recalled the car-starter's tears, and his words of gratitude and love, and, thrusting aside my depression, I have thanked God and taken courage.



CHAPTER IV

HOW THE YOUNG  
BARTENDER WAS SAVED



## CHAPTER IV.

SOME years ago, in Boston, a young man and his sister came to see me one evening in great trouble concerning their brother. The story they told me was one of those heart-breaking stories that come so often to the ear of the minister of a large city church.

These young people were from Nova Scotia. The father had died some years before, and the mother had been left with a large family with only one of them old enough to be of any help. This boy was the young man who had come to see me. He told how his mother had dreaded to have him leave home, but there had to be help from the outside or the family would be broken up and scattered, and

so with a breaking heart she let him go away to Boston to work. Tears ran down his manly face as he told of the last night at home, of the Bible his mother gave him, and of her earnest pleading with him to lead a Christian life in the strange city.

Well, he came to Boston, found work, joined the church, and had got along well. He sent back all his wages that he could spare to help the mother and the children at home. After a while the next one to him, a girl, became old enough to come to Boston and enter into domestic service, and now, for three or four years, the two had been working to make the burdens lighter for the old mother in the far-off Canada home. They were both earnest Christians and honest, self-respecting young people. And now they came to the burden of their story, which had brought them to me. They were not members of my church, but as I had been very closely

identified with temperance work, they had hoped I might be of value to them in their great emergency.

This was their trouble: Two years before, George, a younger brother, and the very idol of his mother's heart, had also come to the city. He had had the same careful training by his devout Christian mother, but he had gotten employment where he had been thrown into evil associations and had been led into the habit of drink. This had lost him his place, and, in spite of all they could do, he had taken a place as a bartender some six months before their coming to me. After this his downfall had been rapid. He had drunk and drunk until he was bloated, and his beautiful features were becoming coarse and revolting. They had come to me hoping that I might be able to advise them. They had not written their mother about his condition, for they feared it would kill her if she knew;

and I have seldom in my life seen anybody in sorer trouble than were that brother and sister.

I must confess that it seemed like a very hopeless case. We prayed together about it, and I urged them to keep on praying for him, and to use every influence they had to get him out of the business, and, in the meantime, if any opportunity offered, to bring him to me, so that I might talk with him.

About two weeks passed, when the young woman came to see me alone, saying that her brother had lost his place as bartender because of his drunkenness, and she was hoping that now there might be a chance to do something. It so happened that, the day before her visit, the proprietor of a newly established sanitarium for the cure of drunkenness had met me on the street and told me that if I would send them someone in whom I was particularly interested they would treat the case free. I told



the young girl about this, and begged her to bring her brother to me, and see if we could not persuade him to go to this sanitarium. She immediately caught at this, for he had been sick for a few days and was now thoroughly sober and seemed to be more repentant and to have more feeling concerning his condition than he had shown for a long time.

The next morning she brought the young man to my study. In spite of the awful traces of dissipation he was a handsome young fellow and bore in his features and especially in his eyes the unmistakable traces of real manhood. Poor fellow, he had been caught in the devil's net by his genial heart, and his feet had been tripped from under him, as have the feet of ten thousands of others, almost before he knew it. I saw that he was now thoroughly ashamed of himself, and that, while willing to do anything, he was almost entirely hopeless of any good coming of it.

I had a long talk with him about it, told him of several cases that had come under my own observation of men who had been greatly helped by medical treatment in overcoming the drink habit, and after I had gotten him thoroughly interested and somewhat encouraged I quietly urged upon him the greater cure for all sinfulness that was to be found in the Great Physician. I suggested to him that all his troubles had come to him because he had been tempted out of the path in which he had been brought up. That after coming to Boston none of its wickedness would have affected him if he had retained his habit of Bible reading and prayer and church-going which his mother had taught him—putting himself in the care of the Saviour. At the mention of his mother he was deeply moved, and as I talked gently and tenderly about her his pride seemed to break down completely and he cried like a child.

“Oh! I know it! I know it!” he said. “She is praying for me! I have tried to forget it for a year, but I know she is still praying! It would kill her if she could see me now.”

Then I assured him that his mother’s God was also his God, and that if he prayed to him, even now, in his sin and sorrow, God would hear him and forgive him. When I asked if he would like to have me pray with him, he exclaimed most eagerly, “Oh, yes, do!”

It was borne in upon me by the Holy Spirit that it was the crisis hour of the man’s soul. We kneeled down together, I on one side and his sister on the other. I poured out my soul in prayer, and she followed in supplication. I do not think I ever heard such a prayer for another as that sister poured out to God. I doubt if she had ever heard her own voice in prayer before. She was a timid little body and I do not imagine that she had ever prayed aloud in meeting

in her life. But, oh, how she prayed that morning! She told the whole story over again to God. It was a new parable of the Prodigal Son, except that it was a mother waiting at home, and the poor prodigal, with the smell of the swine still on him, was just now coming to himself.

When the sister had finished her prayer, I urged him to pray for himself, and he did so, in broken incoherent sentences at first, but soon in a perfect flood-tide of repentance. And then, suddenly a great thing happened. I never could tell just how it came; it reminded me at the time of the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." So it was in this case. Suddenly the agonizing man ceased to agonize. He stopped praying right in the middle of a sentence,

and though his tears still flowed, and great sobs shook his frame, both the sister and myself felt that a great change had come.

I turned to look at his face and found him turning to look at me. His face was wet with tears, but there was infinitely joyous wonder shining in his eyes, and I said: "George, are you forgiven?"

And he said, and with the very first words his joy increased: "My burden is gone! Yes! He forgives me!" And then we all sprang to our feet, and the sister hugged him and kissed him, and we all cried again, but this time they were tears of joy.

Soon I began to speak about the arrangements for his going out to the sanitarium. Then he turned to me and said, "I do not believe I will go."

"Why?" I inquired, astonished.

"Well," he said, "I came intending to go, because there seemed nothing else to do. It was my only hope, and I

had not much faith in that. But now it seems different. God has forgiven me. I have Christ, my Saviour, to help me, and I am going to trust him."

Of course I was greatly surprised, and not entirely easy as to the outcome. But there was something about it all so strongly indicating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that I did not try to change his purpose. After gratefully thanking me, they went away. I kept track of them for many months, and during all that time George lived a strong and courageous Christian life, having gained constant victory over all temptation from the old appetite which had so degraded and despoiled him.

There were several factors in the young bartender's salvation. First of all, on the human side, was that faithful mother whose prayers and Christian fidelity he could never forget. Second, there was the loving faithfulness of that Christian brother and sister; and, finally, there

came my opportunity, and the leading of the Holy Spirit to impress me to seize the critical moment when he could be won to surrender himself to God. It was one of the clearest cases of instantaneous conversion, which thoroughly transformed the man, that I have ever witnessed.





CHAPTER V

THE WINNING OF THE YOUNG  
MERCHANT AND HIS BRIDE



## CHAPTER V.

**I**T was my last Sunday in a far Western town. My pastorate was closing with the day, and the morrow was to see me on my journey, two hundred miles by team and three hundred more by rail, to my next pastorate. Just after the sermon began in the morning I noticed a young couple come in and take a seat near the church door. I did not take note of them specially again, and did not note them at the time, except that I made a mental memorandum that they were strangers; but having retired to the parsonage after the morning service, on answering a knock at the door, I found the same couple on my door-step, and taking them in at a glance said to myself, "They have come to get married."

The young man said they would like to have a little private conversation with me, if it were convenient. This deepened my first impression, and I led them into my study and closed the door. I offered them seats, and the young lady sat down, but the young man was under a nervous tension, and remained standing. In a straightforward manly way he said: "We live in C——, thirty miles away. We were married this morning. We have been engaged for a long time, but this young lady, who is now my wife, has been afraid to marry me for some months until to-day."

He scarcely seemed to know how to go on, and to help him out I inquired, "What was the trouble?"

"Well, you see," he replied, "it is this way: I am a storekeeper. I keep a general dry-goods and provision store, and along with other things I always keep a barrel of whisky on hand to sell when people want it, as all the other

storekeepers do. Well, I got to drinking it myself, and I took too much several times, and Mary was frightened, and was afraid to marry me for fear I would turn out a drunkard. This morning I promised her that if she would marry me we would drive up here to see you. We have seen in the papers how earnestly you are fighting the saloons and working for temperance, and I told her I would come here and ask you to write out a pledge, and then I would sign it, and never drink another drop while I lived."

There was no mistaking the ring of manly purpose in the young man's voice and the flash of earnestness in his eyes as he said these words, and instantly I thought of the day when the young man stood before Jesus, and the Master, looking on him, loved him. I felt that I was standing in the Master's place, and that I must be true to his soul. So I said: "I like you. There's something about you that goes right to my heart. But

let me understand what it is you want me to do."

"Why, I want you to write out a pledge not to drink any more, and I will sign it."

"But you will go back home this afternoon and sell the whisky to-morrow to anybody who wants it, just the same?"

His face fell, but after a moment he said, "Why, of course I could not keep store in this country without selling whisky. I would lose all my trade."

"Then this is what you mean," said I. "You mean to sign this pledge not to drink any more. But you will go back to that town and you will sell whisky to any other man who wants it. You are going to keep your own self sober and clean, but you will sell the stuff to others that you know will ruin them, soul and body. You are going to make your wife feel safe. When you go down town in the morning, you are going to have her peaceful and at rest, never fearing that

you will come back with a hellish smell on your lips and with the stagger in your limbs. But you are going to keep every other woman in town trembling and afraid."

By this time I was ablaze with intensity of feeling, and looking him straight in the eye, I thundered, "No, sir; I will not do it. I will not have any hand in it. I will not soil my fingers with so mean a thing as that. But I will tell you what I will do. If you will let me write a pledge that you will not only quit drinking it, but that you will never sell it again, or have anything more to do with it, I will gladly write it. And that is the only pledge you can keep. You think you would keep the other, but I know you would not. You have already got a taste for it, and with that thirst in you it would be impossible for you to sell it long without coming to drink it again yourself. Do something worthy of yourself. Stop it altogether. Do that,

and I will join you with all my heart."

It was an electric moment. Eye flashed to eye, and I saw the decision when it came in his eye, and he exclaimed, not feebly, but with a volume of manly purpose, "I'll do it!"

Then an inspiration came to me. The glow of the sermon was yet on me, and it flashed through my mind that no other man would ever have such a chance to win these two people to Christ as I had just then. When once I felt that inspiration I was compelled to go on. I had shaken hands with him on his decision, and still held him by the hand. Gripping it anew, I said: "My brother, do something better than that. This is your wedding day. In all the years to come there will never be another day like this. To-day you are setting up your home. Everything is possible to-day. Why not stop all sin to-day? Why quit just one sin? Why quit the drink alone?



Why not join with your wife in dedicating this new home of yours to the service of God? Why not promise God here and now that, by his help, you will not only break off this one sin, but break off every sin, and begin a life of prayer and trust in God? Why not ask him now, for Christ's sake, to forgive your sins and start you in this new life in a new spirit?"

The Holy Spirit helped me. The young wife had been weeping almost from the first of my talk to him, and as my heartfelt appeals followed one after the other the tears came to my own eyes, and the great tears welled up in his and rolled down his cheeks. Again I saw the light of decision come into his face. He tightened his grip on my hand until I felt a thrill of pain, as he almost shouted: "God helping me, I'll do it!"

We knelt there together, the three of us, on the study floor. I poured out my heart to God in earnest prayer to send

forgiveness and regeneration to these young hearts. The young man prayed, and then the young woman. And thus we prayed and cried together until the light of faith came into their hearts and smiles of confidence illuminated their faces.

It was a unique pledge that I wrote out. I have often wished I had kept a copy of it. In it he promised not to drink or sell liquor, and to live prayerfully the Christian life. He signed it, his wife signed it, and I signed it. I gave it to her, and they went away.

The next day I went on my journey. After a brief pastorate in my new home I came over three thousand miles eastward. Five years had gone before I knew of the issue of that hour in my study. Then a lady came to visit me in Boston, who had been living in that town of C—— at the time of the young merchant's visit to my study, and this was the story she told me: The young

man and his bride returned that Sunday evening to their home. Without waiting until the next morning, he went and got two or three of his friends, told them of his pledge, and of his new purpose, and took them with him to his store, where they deliberately rolled his barrel of whisky into the street, and with an axe drove in the head of it and let the liquor run into the gutter. Naturally, he was made the butt of a good deal of ridicule, and everything possible was done to put temptation in his way. But all to no avail. He never had a drop of liquor about the store again, and while it had been predicted that he would lose his trade, and he himself had expected to lose it, it had turned out otherwise, and his business had prospered more than ever. He set up a family altar in his new home and let everybody know of his new purpose to lead a Christian life. A few weeks later a minister came to the town and organized a little union

church. Our young merchant and his wife were on hand to become charter members. A Sunday-school was organized, of which he was made the superintendent, and at the time of the lady's visit that young man and his wife were the very pillars of religious influence and power in that whole community.

I think that was the most joyous information that ever came to me. My heart was filled with it and my soul exulted. I do not think anything that has occurred in my whole career has ever given me a greater impulse to make the winning of souls the chief end of my ministry. God has many kinds of joy for his children to compensate them for all their self-denial on earth's pilgrimage, but the sweetest joy and the most satisfying that I have ever known is the joy of feeling that I have been instrumental in his hands of winning others to Christ.

CHAPTER VI

A GROCER'S CLERK WHO BECAME  
A MIGHTY ARCHER FOR  
THE LORD



## CHAPTER VI.

I DO not know if other ministers have the same feeling or not, but, personally, I have always a great timidity in going to a new church, and never have much comfort or feel at all sure of my standing ground until I am rejoicing over some converts in the Lord's name. When I came from Cincinnati to South Boston, some years ago, and took the pastorate of a large church in the midst of a populous district, I came from a year of wonderful revival success; and yet I remember the many anxious days and some almost sleepless nights for fear my method of preaching and work might not fit the new parish to which I had come. It was, therefore, with great joy that I got on the track of my first man in the new field.

He was a grocer's clerk, and I met him first at the parsonage door when he came to see if he could get my trade. He was a quick-eyed, ruddy-cheeked young fellow, short and round, but alive, every inch of him. I was very much pleased with him, and before he got away I inquired: "Where do you go to church?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Dominie, I don't go anywhere."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know. Got out of the habit, I guess. I used to go to church at home in Nova Scotia."

"Well," I said, "you will have to come and see me now, anyhow. Turn about is fair play. If I buy your goods, you will have to come and take some of my goods."

That seemed to strike his fancy, and he went away saying, "All right, I'll come around next Sunday night."

To make sure he did come around I went to the store on purpose the next



Saturday afternoon, and looked him up, and reminded him that I would be looking for him.

It was my habit then, as now, to be at the door of the church Sunday morning and evening when the church is opened, and shake hands with the people when they come in, till time for the service to begin. So the next Sunday evening I was on the lookout for my grocer's clerk. When he came I had a word with him. I said to him, "I have been thinking about you and praying about you ever since I talked to you the other morning at my house." I told him that I had been homesick all the week because there was not a man or a woman in the community whom I had won to Christ. "And now," said I, "I have been hoping and praying that the Lord will give me you to-night. I somehow feel that it was providential that you came to me the other day, and that if you will begin to be a Christian at once we shall begin

our pastorate here together, and you and I together can do a great deal of good with the blessing of God."

He seemed very much touched. He was a noble fellow, and the brotherly way in which I approached him, and my appeal to his better self to come to Christ so that he could do good, seemed to get hold.

The theme of the sermon that evening was the story of the little boy who had the loaves and fishes which, in the hands of Christ, became sufficient to feed the multitude. It gave me a great chance to get at my young clerk, and I pressed the Gospel home, with him in mind, with all the power I had. The Holy Spirit blessed the message. I could see by his glistening eye and the rapt look on his face that he was greatly interested.

At the close of the sermon I announced that there would be an after-meeting in the vestry, and urged Christians and all others who were interested to remain

with us. To my great joy my grocer clerk came in, and, on my giving an opportunity for any who would like to begin the Christian life to manifest it by rising, he was almost at once on his feet. He was the only one who started that evening. When we knelt to pray, I asked him to come and kneel with me at the altar, so that I might talk and pray with him. He came, and as he knelt there the whole fountain of his nature seemed to be broken up. He melted down in complete surrender to God. He had not knelt there five minutes until his face was full of joy and gladness and the peace that passes all understanding filled his heart and illumined his eyes.

When after a few moments we had a little testimony meeting, he stood up and in the manliest way told how I had spoken to him, and how he had come that night with no expectation of becoming a Christian at once, but that my

words at the door had set him thinking and that during the sermon a great longing had taken hold of his heart to make his life worth something to somebody by giving it to Christ. He said there wasn't much of it, not any more than there was of the little boy's loaves and fishes, but if the Lord could do anything with it he should have every crumb of it.

This was the second Sunday night of my pastorate, and one of the happiest I can remember. For the young clerk's conversion was so bright and clear, and his testimony so evidently sincere, that it melted the entire church, and started the year's work with a great evangelistic uplift. I would have been happier yet, if it were possible, if I had known the full measure of what it meant to win that young man. He at once set himself to work. He made it the rule of his life that he would never let any Sunday go by without having at least

one new man, who had not been in the habit of coming to church, with him at the Sunday-school and at the church service, and it was not uncommon for him to have two or three. He hunted these up while he was on his rounds, taking orders for the grocery store, and in any little wayside opportunity that came to him. He brought these men to the church and got them enrolled in the men's Bible class. Then he introduced them to me and to some earnest Christian men. Having got them there, he worked for their immediate conversion. Many a time I have had him come back to me after going in with a man to the Sunday night's service. He would excuse himself for a moment, and slipping out he would come to me at the door, where I was shaking hands with the people, and he would whisper to me as he got a chance any information about the character or the history of the man which he thought would be valuable to me in making the

sermon more effective in winning him to Christ. Many a valuable point did he give me in that way which I was able to use with profit.

Then, when the after-meeting came, he was always at the man's elbow to draw him quietly in to this service, and as he had come with him, having usually met him by engagement for that purpose, it was not easy for his companion to get away without being rude, and it was impossible to be rude to so good-humored and kindly a fellow as our grocer's clerk. And so in the after-meeting he was ready to say a kind word or offer to go with a man to the altar, or to motion to me cautiously at the critical time to add my invitation to his, which often turned the scale and brought about a permanent decision for Christ.

If one of his men started for the altar he was with him, and he knelt beside him, praying and crying for joy, watching over him with a tender solicitude that

was the wonder and joy of the whole church; and when the light broke into the darkened mind, and the soul of his companion lost its burden of guilt and was able to testify that his sins were pardoned, the next happiest man in that room was the grocer's clerk. He could hardly contain himself. He laughed and cried, and often, when opportunity was given to testify, he was too full for utterance, and would, perhaps, only say a sentence or two, such as, "Christ is the best paymaster in the world"; or, "I would rather have the joy of winning a friend to Christ every week than have the biggest store in town." But no matter what he said, it was always something that just bubbled out of his heart, something that touched the fountain of tears in every heart in the room, and lifted us all nearer to God.

In the first six months after my grocer's clerk was converted he brought to the church, by actual count, twenty-five men

who were hopefully converted to God and joined our church. He was influential and very helpful to many other men, but these twenty-five were all his own. He hunted them up on the outside, and brought them to the church himself, and after he got them there stayed with them till they were happily converted. And yet he was hard at work all the time, working the long hours of a grocer's clerk.

How quickly the world would be brought to Christ if we could set all the men and women of our churches as earnestly at soul-winning as this man gave himself. He is still at it. It is now many years ago since this young man was converted, but once in a while I run across him, and I always see the old light in his eyes, and know that, like Uncle John Vassar, he is faithfully holding on at his work as "God's shepherd dog."



CHAPTER VII

HOW AN OREGON TOWN WAS  
CAPTURED



## CHAPTER VII.

**I**T was in my young days, when I was yet a circuit-rider. I had been sent to Southern Oregon to carve out a circuit where no preacher had ever wrought, except in one little valley, where there was already a class established which met in a school-house. Twenty miles away there was a town on the railroad at D——, which gave the name for the circuit. It had the reputation of being a very wicked town, and it certainly lived up to its reputation. I spent my first Sunday on my new circuit with the lonely band of Christians in the little valley hemmed in by the mountains, but I had written to the postmaster of D—— that I would preach there in the school-house on the next Sunday.

I arrived in D—— on Saturday night, and Sunday morning went over to the school-house. It was a small affair of only one room, barren and barn-like. Just eleven people came to the services that morning, nine women and two men—one, a man from three or four miles away, who in a mild way was a Christian, and the other the man with whom I had stayed all night.

Giving emphasis to the smallness of our congregation, some two or three hundred men were gathered together at a horse-race in plain sight of the school-house, out on a little level flat adjoining the town. Their yelling was very annoying during the entire services. My host had told me that the horse-race had been arranged for that spot in special resentment against the fact of a preacher having been assigned to the region.

I preached as best I could, and then told my few hearers that I had sent **notice** for a service **in** another school-

house some ten miles away for that evening, but that I would come back and preach the next Sunday morning and evening in D——, and I wished them to tell everybody they saw that week that if they would come to church the next Sunday they would find the school-house full of people. They looked surprised and amused, as though they thought I was in for a big disappointment. But when I saw that horse-race in the morning I felt that the battle was on, and that I was either to be defeated or to win a victory that would mean everything to my success right there in that town. So I determined on a bold measure.

I rode on and preached to a handful of people in a little farm settlement on Sunday night, and Monday came back again to D—— and remained there for the week. During that week I visited every house where a human being lived within several miles of the town. I went into the saloons, and into the mills, into

the logging camp, into every store and private house. Everywhere I had the same story to tell. I told them the experience of the last Sunday, that there had only been eleven out to hear the Word of God, while there were nearly three hundred in the drinking, gambling carousal at the horse-race.

"Come, now," I would say, "give the Lord a fair chance. The devil has been having a free hand here for a long time, and he has made a bad mess of it. Come and give me a hearing. Let decent things at least have turn about with the devil."

That sort of talk aroused their attention and caught their fancy. By Thursday of that week I was the one subject of conversation for five miles around.

On Saturday something happened that gave me great hope and courage. Everywhere I had gone I had asked, "Do you know of any Christian in the community?" and I had always received the

answer, "Yes, there is one," and then they would go on to tell me about a sick woman who lived up on a mountain some miles from town. She had been confined to her room for a number of years, but everybody bore testimony to the fact that she was a Christian, and they usually ended up their remarks of appreciation with this sentence: "If ever there was a Christian, she is one."

Saturday morning I went up to see her. It was a lonely place, and I remember thinking what a terrible thing it must be to live there year after year chained to one's bed by sickness. But when I was ushered into her room I forgot all about this. I shall never forget the look on that woman's face as I came in. The news had found its way up the mountain, and she knew what was going on. As I came into the room her face was full of joy and expectancy. She clapped her hands together, and, with tear-wet eyes, exclaimed, "I thank God

that my prayers are answered at last!"

Though every line in her face revealed the traces of the pain she had suffered and the long years of her confinement to the house, yet it was a face of wonderful peace. Her faith in God never wavered and she had that spiritual insight which makes of pain a tutor to culture and to ennoble the soul.

As I sat there by her bedside she told me that several months before my coming there had been some terrible results from drunkenness in the community, and she had begun to pray to God every day that he would send a preacher to the town who might be instrumental in bringing about a revival of religion and the conversion of the people, and that when she heard that I was in the neighborhood and was going about from house to house she had felt an answer of peace and now thoroughly believed that God had answered her prayers and



that we were to have a great work of grace.

You cannot easily imagine how much comfort that was to me. I was very young, but little more than a boy, and the loneliness of this effort to get a hold on that community, without any church to back me up, was very hard, and this good woman's conversation, her prayers, and her faith were a divine tonic to me.

I stayed for dinner in the house, and prayed with her again in the afternoon, and went away to the wicked little town feeling that I had been in an "upper room" like that where the disciples waited for the power which made Pentecost possible.

The next day that school-house would not hold half the people who came. Not only every seat, but every bit of standing room in it was taken, and, as the weather was mild, the people crowded around the windows and around the door. There was not a great deal of preliminary

service. I had a hymn-book, and the man I have spoken of, who had belonged to the church in other years, and who had been present the Sunday before, also had a hymn-book. I never could sing much, and he carried a tune very lamely, so that the singing was very weak and lifeless. But I read the Scriptures, and I poured out my heart to God in prayer that the people before me might have hearts to receive the Word of God, might see their own sinfulness and be willing to accept Christ as their Saviour. Then I stood up to preach. I knew I could not preach much, but I gave them the Word of God. My text was, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"

As I had gone around during the week I had gathered a great many incidents of the awful havoc of sin, especially of gambling, drunkenness, quarreling and fighting in that very community;

and now, with absolute fearlessness, I went straight at them about their own sins. I tried to show them that the devil was a hard master, and that they had been serving him and working for him very hard, and had very poor satisfaction for it. I only preached about twenty-five minutes, but it was long enough to make some of them fighting mad, to melt others to tears, and to send some others away looking very solemn. At the close of the service I announced that I would preach that night on "The Sin and Doom of Drunkenness."

As soon as I had pronounced the benediction a stage-driver, who had the reputation of being the most wicked man in the community, and who was ruining his family by drunkenness and gambling, came up, swore a horrid oath, and said I must find it — lonesome, and he pitied me, interlarding every sentence with an oath. But he ended by asking me to go home with him to dinner. I

accepted, and as we walked along home I became convinced that, in spite of all his swearing and his bold manner, the man was hard hit, and that God had used the morning service to deeply convict him of sin. I acted on this idea, and stuck to him that whole afternoon like a leech, and prodded at him in every way I could. I charged him with ruining his boys, and told him that unless he repented now and turned over a new leaf they would soon be so far gone he never could bring them back. In spite of his wickedness he was by nature a generous-hearted man, and I urged upon him the good he might do by boldly turning his back on the devil and leading in a surrender to Christ.

He made me no promises that afternoon, and tried to make me believe that he was indifferent. But I felt sure that he was not. At night we had as big a crowd as we had had in the morning. The school-house was lighted with can-

dles hung up around the walls. I preached that night on, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" I read that awful list that Paul gives, in which drunkards are specially named, and with all the power that was in me I uncovered the horrors of drunkenness. I illustrated it with incidents that I had gathered during the week in their own neighborhood, with which they were acquainted. If I had done this in a hard way, no doubt they would have mobbed me. But I was dead in earnest, and I was young, and so evidently tender and sincere about it that the Holy Spirit made them listen to it. I had not spoken thirty minutes when tremendous conviction fell upon the congregation. Men as well as women were sobbing and crying. I asked the men to get up from a bench in front of me, and then I pleaded for those who would cease their sins and turn to Christ to come to that bench

and kneel down there. The first to come was the stage-driver, and his wife came with him. His prompt action had great effect. Others crowded forward, and every bit of room on both sides of that bench was soon crowded with those who were kneeling there. I prayed awhile, then I talked awhile, and then prayed again. There was nobody to sing, and nobody else to pray, until after half an hour or so the stage-driver was happily converted, and then he exhorted and prayed. The meeting did not break up till nearly midnight. Some ten men were hopefully converted that night, and three or four women.

I announced that there would be a meeting every night that week, and asked them to bring any old hymn-books they had, no matter what kind. I spent the days of that week visiting among the people, and talking and praying in their homes, and preaching at night. We began to have good singing. They

brought all sorts of books, but we sang the old hymns that were in all of them, and as the people were converted it was wonderful how it aroused their musical powers. Before the week was out we had good congregational singing.

I could only stay ten days at that time, as I had appointed a meeting in another place, but I left a class of sixty-five men and women. It became the main point on my circuit. Before the year was out we raised money for a church, and had land and money given to build an academy, and it has been for years a church-going academy town. But that revival was the way the transformation was begun.





CHAPTER VIII

A SERVANT GIRL'S QUARTET



## CHAPTER VIII.

ONE can never tell how great a victory has been won when a man or a woman or a child has been captured for Christ. There are always possibilities of values in the case of which it is impossible for us to dream. I suppose when Naaman captured the little girl who afterward led to the cure of his leprosy, it was considered a very insignificant achievement, and yet the capture of a major-general would have been a small thing compared to that victory. For it not only led to the healing of Naaman's body, but it led to his conversion to a happy and comforting faith in God. The story is told that at a certain revival meeting, which lasted some weeks, only one little tow-headed boy was converted, and that there was

a feeling of great disappointment among the people of that church. But that tow-headed lad turned out to be Bishop Matthew Simpson, who led multitudes to Christ.

I have had many experiences illustrating this same thought, but I think one of the most delightful of them was the conversion of a little English girl who came to South Boston, Mass., during my pastorate there. She had just come from the Old Country, and had taken service as a cook in a home not far away from my church when I first met her. She was a little slip of a thing, and looked altogether too young and inexperienced to be away from home. I well remember the feeling of pity and the awakened sympathy I had for her the first time I met her at the church door and in reply to my questionings she told me that she was only a month from the Old Country and that all her family were on the other side of the ocean. She was

not a Christian, but I saw that she was in that first period of loneliness and homesickness where a little sympathy and kindness would win her to the Lord, and so I did everything that I could to make her feel at home, and as she started to go up the stairs I followed her to say: "There never could be a better time to give your heart to the Lord than to-night. He was lonely and homesick himself sometimes, when he was here on earth, and he knows how to be good and kind to homesick folks. Give your heart to the Lord now, and you won't be alone any more, for there will be a whole church full of people who will be your brothers and sisters in Christ."

The poor little girl was so utterly alone that a kind word went straight to her heart, and with tears in her eyes she went on up the stairs, saying, "I will try."

Sure enough, in the after-meeting that very night that little English servant girl was converted. She was a quiet

body, and did not make much show about her emotions, but a very sweet glow was on her face, and all the lonely homesick shadows had gone out of it as she went away from the church.

She went back to the place where she was at work, and the next morning her mistress was surprised when she came into the kitchen and found Annie singing over her work. The girl's loneliness had touched the kind-hearted woman, and she had been very sorry for her, but when she came in Monday morning all this was gone, and the girl seemed so happy that she wonderingly inquired: "What makes you so happy, Annie? All your blues seem to have blown away."

"Oh, Mrs. G——, something wonderful happened last night. I went down to the church, feeling so lonesome and sad that I almost wished I were dead. And the minister was standing at the door, shaking hands with the people, and he shook hands with me, and asked who

I was, and where I came from, and before I knew it he had the whole story out of me and knew all about me. I did not say a word about being homesick, but he knew it, somehow, and told me that the best way to get rid of it was to give my heart to Christ, who used to be so lonesome and homesick, and who knew how to comfort us. I never dreamed of starting to be a Christian when I went in at the church door, but by the time I got to my seat I had almost made up my mind that I would. And during the sermon I said to myself, 'If he gives me a chance to-night, I'll start.' And so I went to the altar in the after-meeting, and as I prayed to God all my loneliness and homesickness left me and I felt that my sins were forgiven and that God would take care of me and not let anything bad happen to me over here alone. And I came home happy last night, and I went to sleep happy for the first time since I left home. And this

morning I feel like singing all the time."

Now Mrs. G—— was not only not a Christian, but she was a woman whose associations had led her very far from Christ and the church. She had felt very bitter and unbelieving about the church and about Christians, and so she watched this new convert very narrowly.

But Annie's religion would bear watching. It was just as natural and simple as a child's trust in its parents. And as her mistress noticed her good cheer and happiness, a great hungering took possession of her own heart. She had recently had many things to trouble her and her heart was very heavy and sad, and through the night of her gloom shone constantly the cheerful ray of the happiness of Annie's new-found religion. The girl never preached to her; she just lived, cheerful, happy, and loving, but somehow everybody in the house felt



that this sweet happiness came from Annie's religion.

Mrs. G—— stood it for two weeks, and then to Annie's astonishment and delight she said to her on Sunday morning, "Annie, if you don't mind, I would like to go with you to your church to-night." She had never even been inside the church door, though she had lived in the community for years. Of course Annie was greatly pleased, and that evening she introduced Mrs. G—— to me at the door of the church.

She had no opportunity to say anything to me about her, and I knew nothing more of it until the after-meeting. There were several seekers at the altar that night, and we had already had a season of prayer, when, on rising to sing, I noticed that Annie was talking to the woman whom she had introduced to me, and that this woman was crying as if deeply affected. I at once reopened the invitation for any others who would

like to seek Christ to come to the altar, and a moment later the lady arose and came with Annie to the mercy seat. She was converted that night, and told me that very evening the story I have related. The cheerfulness and happiness of the little cook's religion had appealed to her until she had felt that she could not live longer without it.

In less than a month after Mrs. G——'s conversion she, with Annie, came to the altar one evening with the daughter of the family, who was happily converted.

A little later Annie told me one Sunday afternoon that her brother, with his wife and two children, had arrived from England during the past week, and that she was going to try to bring her brother with her to church that night. He had been a drinking man, and his family had encouraged his coming to America, hoping that if he got away from his old associates he might break off his evil

habits and live a new life. But Annie felt, as I did, that the only real hope of his reformation lay in his becoming a sincere Christian, and so I agreed to unite my prayers with hers and to make a special effort that evening to reach him with the Gospel.

Sure enough, he was on hand that night, a ruddy-faced Englishman, with the traces of dissipation written on his countenance. I had been forewarned, and I make it the rule of my life never to disobey such warnings. If I know of a special sin of a man in the congregation about whom somebody is greatly interested at that moment, I never fail to find some way to thrust my harpoon there, and so I went directly for the heart of Annie's brother that night. God blessed the message. He came into the after-meeting broken-hearted. She came with him to the altar, and he knelt there, crying like a child, sobbing and calling aloud for mercy. He confessed

his sins and went away with a new peace in his heart.

I was not at all surprised the next Sunday evening to see the whole family at church. They came early—Annie, with her brother and his wife, and the two little children, one a baby and the other scarcely more. That night it was her brother's wife she had on her heart. She marshaled them well front in the church, and I knew she was praying every minute. It was not a remarkable thing that the wife was at the altar that night. It is the rarest thing in the world where a wife does not readily follow her husband when he sincerely repents and gives himself to God. And so I should have been disappointed indeed if she had not yielded to the invitation. The young man came with his wife to the altar while Annie stayed with the babies.

The sister-in-law did not readily come into the light. There was some hesita-

tion, perhaps some lack of clearness in her mind about the simplicity of the Gospel. Annie stood this delay as long as she could, and then I saw her reach over to a motherly old woman sitting in front, and arrange with her to take care of the babies, while she slipped away to the altar where, throwing her arms around her sister's neck, she talked with her, meanwhile the tears running down her own cheeks. But she successfully pointed her to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," for not five minutes after she came, "the light that never was on sea or land" shone in the face of the seeking woman.

And that was the way the little servant girl won her quartet.



CHAPTER IX  
AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT





## CHAPTER IX.

ONE Sunday afternoon a fine-looking girl, evidently of Irish extraction, came to see me at the parsonage in one of our large cities. She had a very sad story. Her mother had died some years before, leaving three girls and the husband. One of the girls was only a little baby at the time, and the two older daughters had kept house for the father and had managed to keep the family together. But the father had taken to drink, and it had grown steadily worse, until now he was drunk a good part of the time. At the time the young woman came to see me her father was just getting up from an attack of pneumonia, and had gone on a spree which had come near being the last of him: He was now laid up in bed, and the

doctor said he would certainly die very soon unless he gave up drink. The girl begged me to come and see if I could do anything for them.

It seemed like a hopeless case, but I comforted her all I could, and promised to come before my evening service. Just before she left—indeed, after she had risen to go—I inquired if she was a Christian, and found that she was not. I asked her to sit down again, and for half an hour, in the plainest, simplest way I could, I preached the Gospel to her. After the surprise of the attack, her sore and wounded heart yielded readily to the offered comfort and help, and we kneeled together in the parsonage parlor, and as I prayed she consciously accepted Christ as her personal Saviour.

When I arrived at the Irishman's home, for I found that though the children had been born in this country the father had come over as a young man from the North of Ireland, he was still

very much under the influence of drink. I had a hard time getting him aroused enough so that he would appreciate what I had to say. When I did, I talked to him very straight, not only about the sin of his drinking, but the meanness of it with reference to his daughters, who were trying to make him a comfortable home. I never talked straighter to a man in my life. I was perfectly willing to make him mad, if only I could stir him up and get him out of his lethargy. I have often found it is far better to make angry a man who is going on in wicked ways, which his own conscience disapproves, than it is to leave him unmoved. It is not a far cry from anger to other strong feelings, and if you can get a man good and hot at your rebuke you can often turn his anger toward himself for deserving such talk.

I finally got him stirred up sufficiently so that he began to tell me, as if that would hide his own shame, that he came

of a good old Irish family who were Christians, and that his brother was an honored preacher in Ireland. As soon as he told me this I went for him more strongly than ever, and tried to make him feel the shame of bringing such disgrace on an honored name. Before I left I prayed with him and his daughters and promised to come again.

I went again the next day. He was clear of the whisky now, but was very hard and seemingly without any hope of the possibility of becoming a Christian or much changing his course of life. I talked and talked, and though he let me pray with him, I could get no hopeful word with him about himself. On that day the second daughter was present and she went with me into the hall to let me out. At the front door I paused and inquired if she was a Christian. She said she was sorry to say she was not. I told her that I was very glad she was sorry, for that showed that the

Lord had been speaking to her, and that she was very near to the kingdom. I found that her sister had been talking with her, and that she was already under conviction of sin, and very much wanted to be a Christian. As we stood there by the door, with my hand on the door-knob, I told her how simple the terms were, and we bowed our heads and I prayed for her. When the prayer was through the face that she lifted to me was full of sweet content, and though her eyes were tearful, there was in them the glistening promise of a new hope.

I kept going every three or four days to see my Irishman. The man strangely interested me. He was a great, tall, square-shouldered giant of a man, and with a very strong face. I felt if I could really capture him for the Lord, and change him from the devil's service to that of Christ, it would be a great victory. But the work went slowly, and I think I never have seen a case, in

which victory was finally won, quite so discouraging as that proved to be, until Providence threw into my hands a new ally.

One morning, a few weeks after I had first been called in, I received a letter from Ireland. It was from the brother of my man, who is a distinguished and honored minister there. He wrote to tell me how glad he was that I had been to call on his only brother, and to thank me for my interest in him. He said drink had been the man's curse all his life. He told me he had been praying for this brother for many years, and that his mother was still living, a very old woman and very frail, but that she prayed for her boy every day, and did not feel that she could go home to heaven until he was saved.

When I got that letter, and especially when I read about the old mother's prayers, I took hope. I somehow felt that the Irishman had to come. I

now, at least, had one new lever, and I determined to use it for all it was worth. That afternoon I took my letter and went down to see him. I told him I had a letter from his brother. He was very much interested, and I could see it moved him. I told him his brother said he had been praying for him ever since he left home. Then I took the letter out of my pocket and read the lines about his mother, about her infirmity and age, and her great anxiety for his salvation, and how she was just waiting on earth, praying every day for her wandering boy.

That letter broke his heart. He had not yet decided to be a Christian, but he was full of anguish and remorse. The tears rolled down his cheeks and he seemed rather glad that day to have me pray for him. Yet I could get no decision out of him.

At the time of this last visit I had begun holding revival meetings and was

preaching every night. I urged him to come to the meeting that night, but he would not promise. I felt that I could not give up, for if I could not get him that day, with the unusual influence of the message concerning his mother, which had so melted his heart, I never would get him. So I kept at it. I must have plead with him half an hour or more, simply on the point of coming to the meeting that night. At last, almost in despair, he exclaimed, "Well, you've been so kind, and you're so persistent about it, I will come."

I was sure he would keep his word. He came, and came very early. I was out at the door, shaking hands with the people as they came in. His youngest daughter, a girl now thirteen years of age, was with him. I stopped him, and talked a little while in the vestibule, urging him to make up his mind that night and give himself to Christ; and although he would not promise, I could



see that the conversation of the afternoon had greatly moved him and that he was in a hopeful condition. I walked in with him and saw that he and the little girl had seats immediately at the front. I did not intend that anything should interfere with the Gospel having a fair chance at him that night.

I remained in the vestibule and shook hands with the people through the song service, not going in until it was time for my sermon. When I went in they were singing, and I could see that the service was having the effect I expected on my Irishman. He had been brought up a Christian. The old hymns brought sacred memories to him that touched him to the heart's core. He had not been to church now for several years, and it all came back upon him with unwonted power that night. And when the soloist sang a tender and touching appeal to come to Christ, I saw a tear rolling down over each cheek. I must

have preached the Gospel for all, that night, for a number accepted Christ and were converted in the after-service; but my conscious appeal was to the Irishman. I felt as a lawyer does when he knows that one jurymen is against him and must be convinced, and so throughout the sermon I sought to win the verdict. A man who has not heard a sermon for several years, but who was brought up to give reverence to the Gospel, finds it hard to withstand a straightforward, simple presentation of the divine appeal. The Irishman's heart broke under it. The agony of his face was something terrible. Finally he hung his head and sobbed, and at last, when the invitation was given for sinners to come to the altar and throw themselves on the mercy of God, he was the first man there. The little girl came with him. How he did pray! With tears and cryings and groanings he repented and laid hold upon the Christ who is

able to save unto the uttermost. The little girl opened her heart to the Lord as naturally as a morning-glory opens its bell to meet the dawn, and the two of them came into the church together.

And that is the way God pays. I started in on a forlorn hope to save one poor drunken man, and I came out, through the mercy and blessing of God and the prayers of that brother and dear old mother, with a man saved and redeemed and three daughters all consecrated to the Christian life.

I have never had a happier task than that of answering the letter of the brother in Ireland, telling him the whole story and sending my love and congratulations to the dear old mother, who through all the years of disappointment and delay had not failed to keep her tryst with God and to daily send her prayers heavenward for the salvation of her boy.



CHAPTER X

WON THROUGH FRIENDSHIP



## CHAPTER X.

I ONCE found in the neighborhood of my church in a large city a family which interested me greatly. It consisted of the husband and wife and two children. I became acquainted with them first through the children, who were in the Sunday-school. One day, speaking to one of the Sunday-school teachers about the bright little girl as she passed us, the teacher said, "I suppose you know about her father?" I replied that I did not know the father, and asked what she meant. Her reply was that the father was one of the very best business men in the community; that he belonged to an old and honored family, and was himself a refined and cultivated gentleman; but that he seemed to have an in-

herited weakness for strong drink. This manifested itself in a peculiar way. He never went about liquor saloons and was never known to drink in one of them. Indeed, he would go months at a time without drinking at all, and then the spell would come on him, and an awful thirst would take possession of him. He would take liquor home with him to his house, and there he would drink until his stomach and throat would be raw with it and he was on the very verge of the grave. Then the doctor would come in and patch him up, and possibly it would be five or six months before it would happen again.

The story moved me very deeply, and I saw at once that here was a family that needed help. As the children came to the Sunday-school, it gave me a right to call at the house, and I did so a few days after I had heard the story, and made a pleasant acquaintance with the wife and mother. In response to my



invitation she attended the church, and I called also at the business place of the husband and made his acquaintance. I found him as he had been described to me, a most delightful gentleman, a man full of dignity, and yet of fine feelings and genial, kindly nature. I deliberately set myself to cultivate the friendship of the family, and I was met half-way by all the parties. It was not long before I felt that the time had come to press for a decision in the case of the wife. I sought her at her own home, and urged not only her own obligation to Christ, but also her duty to be a Christian on account of her influence upon her husband and children. She responded readily to all these appeals and definitely accepted Christ and came into the church. And it was at this time that she opened her heart to me and told me the story of her husband's weakness and of the haunting fear she had that his awful habit would get

worse and worse until it would, ere long, carry him away. I promised her to devote myself with all my soul to his salvation, and told her that I had been thinking it over and had made up my mind that the only thing I could do was to win his friendship; that I believed if I could make him love me I could then win him to Christ, for I had seen that it was not easy to get back of that wall of quiet dignity and reserve where the real man lived.

So I set myself to make a friend. It was not hard work, for I liked the man very much. We had many tastes in common, and I made much of these. Of all out-door recreations I am most fond of fishing, and I soon found that he, too, was an ardent fisherman, and so we planned trips together. Sometimes we went away for two or three days together on fishing excursions; but no matter what we fished for, or whether our luck was good or bad, my hook was always

baited for my friend's soul. A year and a half went by, nearly two years. Three times during that period he had come near to death in those times of awful giving way to drink. The last time my power over him as his friend had become so strong that, as he was getting better, but before he had gone out to his store, he sent for me to come in and see him. I went to see him, and he opened his heart to me, and told me what a terrible time he had had, and how ashamed he was to so demean himself before his family and in the eyes of his friends. This was my opportunity, and I used it as far as my ability could reach. I told him there was only one hope, and that was in Jesus Christ. He had been trying to save himself from his besetting sin, and he had failed again and again. But there was one hope he had not tried, and that was Christ. I talked with him a long time, and though he heard me with great respect, and

permitted me to pray with him, it seemed impossible for him to believe that even Christ could give him power over this sin which had so debased him.

A series of union evangelistic meetings were being held in one of the churches of the city at the time, and I asked him if he would go with me that evening, and he promised to do so. When we arrived at the church it was packed to the door and I took him around with me to the side door, and up on the platform, where seats were reserved for the ministers and singers. My friend seemed almost frightened to be in such a conspicuous place, but it was the only way to get into the house, and so he yielded. The sermon was a plain, heart-searching one that made everybody look at Christ as the divine Saviour. Just as the preacher was getting well started a messenger came, and tapping me on the shoulder said that my wife desired me to come to the parsonage, nearly a quar-

ter of a mile away. I feared very much to leave my friend, and yet, not knowing what was desired, I felt I must respond to the call. Asking my friend to wait until my return, even if the meeting should adjourn, I slipped back to the rear of the platform and hurried home. I found it was only a stray couple waiting to get married, and, I never married a couple more impatiently. I performed the ceremony as quickly as possible, and ran all the way back to the church, hoping and praying that the minister might preach a long sermon that night. The sermon was not yet done. I slipped in beside my friend, and I saw that his interest and his hope seemed greatly deepened. When the invitation was given to go into the inquiry-room at the close of the sermon, and I turned to him and said, "Shall we go?" he yielded without any further urging, and when we got down into the inquiry-room we went away into a quiet corner by ourselves,

and there on our knees, while I prayed, he surrendered his whole heart and life to Jesus Christ as his Lord and King. The next Sunday I had the indescribable joy of receiving him into the church.

Many times since then we have talked the matter over together, and again and again he has assured me that I never would have won him to Christ if I had not first won his friendship. He declares that it was his love for me that led him finally to have courage to hope that he might love Christ as I did, and find in Christ's love the help which I believed was there for him.

We still go fishing together sometimes, and I shall not forget, while memory remains, one summer afternoon sitting in the boat on the lake as the sun was dropping low in the west. We were looking about at the green wall of the mountains and speaking of its beauty. Gradually the conversation drifted to a more personal quarter and we spoke

appreciatively and reminiscently of the many good times we had had together on such excursions. Suddenly turning to me, his eyes filled with tears, and with a glow of thanksgiving on his usually pale cheek, he said in a trembling, hushed voice, "All that I am - I owe to you." I would not have exchanged that short sentence and the look that came with it for any wealth or honor that the world has power to give, and I went home that night with a new sense of appreciation of the blessedness of the privilege of being a soul-winner.





## CHAPTER XI

### AN OLD SAINT'S SURPRISE



## CHAPTER XI.

ONE of the most delightful scenes I ever witnessed in the work of saving souls—and altogether the most delightful and gratifying experiences I have ever known have been in that work—was the intense surprise and exquisite joy I once saw in the face of a white-haired old man at the conversion of his son. It occurred in the following way: I found in one of my pastorates in a large Eastern city an old man who was pre-eminently the saint of the church. He had been there for a long time and his godly life, his spiritual tone, and the graces of the Spirit manifested in all his conduct marked him out as a Christian of the noblest type. It was not an uncommon thing to have people on the outside of the church, men rough

and coarse, who did not take much interest in Christian things, say about him: "Well, I will say, if ever there was a Christian, Father T—— is one." The old man had not much money to give to the church; he was not specially gifted in prayer or particularly eloquent in his testimony; but he was a good man. He had no enemies. Everybody loved him. And, as they say in Washington, "he had the ear of the House" every time he got up to speak. The old man had our ears because he had our hearts.

About the time I came to the church the old man's son, who had been away from home a long time, came back from his travels and work in the West and settled down near his father and went into business. The boy had been well brought up in a Christian way, but he had gone away from home very early and had drifted entirely away from religious things. He had been in the mines and had associated with wicked

and reckless men and women until he had simply become indifferent to religious affairs. The old home teaching and example of his father (his mother had died young) had hedged him in, however, and kept him back from shameful and outrageous sins. He did not drink or gamble, and lived, so far as the world could see, an orderly, moral, and upright life. But his heart was hard toward God, and he had been so long away from the church, and had lived prayerless so many years that, while he was polite and good-humored about it, he let you have no chance to get inside to the real citadel of his heart in any attempt to win him to Christ.

The attitude of the son was a great sorrow to his father. He had been praying for him all the years, and it was the longing of his heart to see him a happy and useful Christian. Happily the bond between the father and the son was unusually strong and tender. The boy

could not say too much concerning his father's goodness. He had unbounded faith in the sincerity and genuineness of his father's religion. During the year and more that I was trying to win him to an open confession of Christ, the one hopeful thing about the attempt was this fact, that I knew he never doubted his father's religion. The nearest I ever got home to him in private conversation was when I would turn to the subject of his boyhood and get him to talk about his boyish experiences. That was always sure to bring out something about his father's religious life, something about the family worship, the Bible reading and the prayers that were a part of every day's life. Sometimes he would wind up such a talk by saying: "I do not want you to think that it is my father's fault that I am not a Christian. If ever a man lived right before his children it was my father, and during all the years that I have been away in the mines and in the

mountains, among wicked men, going months and months without ever seeing a church or attending a religious service, not knowing when Sunday had come except that it was wash-day, I never went to bed at night without thinking of my father's family prayers. And if I had never seen another Christian, my father has lived so honestly and so truly a Christian life in my presence that I should always know there was one Christian."

Now when a man would say a thing like that, and say it so loyally and earnestly that his cheeks would glow and his eyes glisten with moisture, you would think you had almost won him. So I thought, only to be disappointed again and again.

You have seen an old snag of a tree growing beside the road. It has been struck by lightning, probably, and split down through the center until most of the top is gone. One side is dead entirely. There is no sign of life anywhere

about the main trunk to be discovered from without. If you see it for the first time in winter you think it is entirely dead, and you are very much astonished along in April to see one little branch up near the top on which the buds begin to swell out, and after a while the leaves break forth, and you see that the heart of the tree is still alive. It is alive in that one spot; but for that one outcropping of life, there would be no hope for the gnarled and wounded tree. Well, it was that way with my young business friend. While he was still a young man in age, he was past middle age in experience with the kind of associations that had wounded and seared his spiritual nature. There was just one green spot of life left in him; that was his love for his father and his unshaken faith in his father's Christianity.

Time passed on, month after month. Again and again I sought opportunities for conversation with him. These were



never hard to obtain. He was a bright, genial fellow, seemed to like me very much, and always met me with a certain kind of frankness when I broached the subject of religion; but I soon discovered that he always met me at the outside gate, and kept the talk out there, and I never got inside, where he really lived. He was an enigma to me. He was so friendly, both to me and to the church, and yet toward God and Christ he was as hard as a rock. I think of all the men I have ever known of his type, a man so good in many ways, he was the most utterly indifferent to the claims of God.

Every now and then his father would speak to me about it, and beg me not to forget him or cease to pray for his conversion. A very powerful and successful revival of religion passed by, but without winning my young friend. He came but little to the meetings, though he always came on Sunday; but they

seemed to have no effect whatever upon him, and when the meetings closed, and he was still outside, the aged father's heart was very heavy.

Now Father T—— himself was a very faithful soul-winner. While I doubt if he ever passed a waking hour during all that year that he did not have some thought and prayer in his heart about the conversion of his son, he did not, on that account, neglect others. No man in the church was more alert in looking out for opportunities to say a good word for his Master or to reach out a helping hand to one in the dark, or to a weak soul that was ready to faint.

So time passed on during the early summer till we came to a wet Sunday night. How well I remember it! I had prepared, with unusual care, an appeal to the unconverted, with special reference to some people whom I hoped would be present and in whom at the time I was interested. But when, that after-

noon, it began to storm, and the night was so rainy that we did not go up into the main auditorium, but turned the people who came into the Sunday-school room, I was bitterly disappointed. I do not know when I have been so disappointed concerning a stormy Sunday night, which I confess is always a great trial to me, as on that night. During the opening service it seemed to me that the sermon I had prepared would be entirely out of place, as I thought that the few who had ventured out through the unusual storm were all Christians. But while they were singing the last hymn the son of my old saint came in and sat down in the back row of chairs near the door. Suddenly there was a flash of light through the black cloud that had been overshadowing my sky. I determined to direct my whole sermon at that man. So far as I knew, he was the only man in that small audience who was not a Christian, and I

secretly purposed to concentrate all my thought and hope on him, and preach my sermon to him as if we were the only two in the audience. As Nehemiah prayed to God for the right word when he stood before the king in the palace at Shushan, so I breathed out my heart to God during the remaining verses of that hymn that this might be the hour for the capture of the man's soul. God greatly helped me in preaching. I delivered the discourse with unwonted zest and earnestness. But toward the chair near the center, in the rear of the room, where that young merchant sat, I directed my gaze. After a few minutes he seemed restless under it and uneasy, and then he gave himself up to it, and we two men seemed looking into each other's souls.

At the close of the sermon I asked the congregation to sing a hymn, and invited any who would like to ask the prayers of Christian people that their own sins

might be forgiven to rise, the congregation remaining seated. There were four verses in the hymn, and three verses were sung, and no one rose. My eyes were on my young friend. His face was white, and I could see that there was a life and death struggle going on in his soul. There he sat, motionless as a statue, as if he were glued to his seat. To me the suspense and agony were something terrible, for I somehow had it borne in on me that if I could not win him there and then I would never have so good a chance again. When the third verse was completed I raised my hand to the pianist and began to speak. Very quietly and very solemnly I went on to say just what was in my heart—that I believed some soul was making a life and death struggle then and there, and I greatly feared that if it grieved the Holy Spirit at that time the struggle would never be so hard for it again. It would always find it easier to shut God

out after that, and it would shut him out at last, and thus shut itself out of heaven. "Now," I continued, "we will sing this last verse, and it is not only a verse of song, it is an open gate into heaven, and I am sure some one ought to enter it." Scarcely the first line of the hymn had been sung when my young business friend leaped to his feet. "Leaped" is the proper word, for he had been holding himself so tense, and had been so stiffening himself against such conviction, that he simply had to leap from it in order to conquer. Until he stood up there had been no sign of emotion about his face except its pallor; but the moment he was on his feet, and had really committed himself, the tears began to run down his cheeks, and he threw himself upon his knees. With difficulty mastering my own great emotion at this sudden and glorious victory, I quietly said that one young man had asked our prayers and was praying for himself;

and urging all to unite their prayers for him, we knelt in prayer.

After several had led briefly in prayer, on rising from our knees, I called for a brief testimony meeting, and very soon Father T—— was on his feet. During the course of his remarks, which were devoted almost entirely to his own experience, he finally spoke very tenderly of his joy that “the young man” had started that evening for heaven. It at once became apparent to the audience, most of whom were acquainted with both the father and son, that the old man, who had been sitting much further front, did not know who it was that had risen. Another old man, a few seats away, was so overcome with this, that, half rising out of his seat, he shouted: “Why, Father T——, don’t you know? It is Albert that started.”

I never saw such surprise and unutterable joy mingled in a human face as I then saw on the face of that dear old

man. He turned around, looking backward toward where his son sat, his hands upraised, and cried out in broken tones: "Oh, is it my boy? Is it my boy?"

In the meantime the young man had found the Lord, and he met his father's looks with a joyous and reverent expression; and when his father sat down, unable to speak further on account of his emotion, the son rose to speak, and I have never heard a sweeter tribute of love and veneration paid by a son to his father than that young man gave out of the new Christian joy that had come to his heart. It was a blessed hour. We all thoroughly appreciated what it must be to be in heaven where the angels have "joy over one sinner that repenteth."



## CHAPTER XII

### THE BOY IN THE DRY-GOODS BOX



## CHAPTER XII.

THERE once appeared in my Sunday-school a boy with the most wonderful head and the most captivating eyes that one could find in a year of travel and search. He was a little fellow, about ten years old, but oh, what a head! It would have been the despair of an artist and at the same time his joy. A wealth of curls, great, dark eyes as gentle as a fawn's and with something so appealing in them that they went straight to your heart. I turned to look at him again and again as I passed around through the Sunday-school. He evidently came from a home of moderate circumstances, for while his clothing was neat and clean, it was well patched. A few weeks passed by and the little boy was very regular at the

Sunday-school and won the hearts of all who came in touch with him.

One Sunday he did not come. Both the superintendent and myself missed him. Then, when he did not come the next Sunday, we went to look him up. It was just before Christmas time, and the weather was very cold. From his address on the class record we found that his home was on one of the very poorest streets in the poorest section of the city. Going to the place, a revelation of poverty came to us that was heart-rending. There was the mother and father and five children, and they lived in two little rooms. One of these rooms was a dark room, without a window in it, and they rented this daytimes to a man who worked nights. The family had been in good circumstances up to within a year of the time of our meeting. The father had earned good wages, and they had lived well. Then the firm for which he labored had gone out of business, and

it had thrown him out of employment. They had come East, hoping to better their condition, but had struck hard times. The father had walked the streets day after day hunting for work. In the meantime they had pawned their wedding presents, and one after another had pawned or sold quite a library of nice books, and then, as things grew worse, all their better clothing had gone the same way. Day after day the father searched for work. The mother, who was frail and in delicate health, did what she could. Now and then the father got a little job to do, but as his good clothing went, and as he lost heart, it became harder and harder to get any employment at all.

And so it happened, as Christmas time drew near, that they were on the very verge of starvation. They had got down to bread and tea, and not much of that. To make matters worse the little boy had fallen ill, and when the superintend-

ent and myself hunted them out the little fellow was terribly sick with typhoid fever and was lying on a little bed made up in a dry-goods box. Without proper medicine and care I have no doubt he would have died within the next two or three days. Of course we gave them temporary relief at once, and saw to it that they had proper food and that the little boy had a chance to get well. I immediately interested myself in finding employment for the man, and was successful. Both the man and his wife had been Christians and members of the church in their former home, and the unexpected help which had come to them from the church at a time when their hearts were so broken and when they seemed to be plunged into the very depths of despair seemed to them to come direct from God and proved to be the cause of a spiritual quickening to which their hearts responded, and they entered with renewed joy upon the Christian life.

None the less beautiful was its effect upon the little boy. I think if an angel from heaven had come down to that tenement house and brought them help in their time of need, it would not have seemed to the little boy more really to have come from God. He had been brought up by a good true mother and had always said his prayers and in a way believed in God and the Bible; but now, as the fever left him and he grew again into health and strength, his whole heart went out to the Lord in reverent love, and he was one of the sweetest and most charming of young Christians.

Not long after this the father was able to secure permanent employment in a suburban town some miles distant, and I did not see them for a good while. Perhaps a year and a half had passed when, going to speak one afternoon at a meeting three or four miles from the town where they were living, at the close of the meeting a young lad leaped upon the plat-

form, and though he seemed six inches taller than when I had seen him last, that beautiful face, that glorious curly head and the fawn-like eyes could not be forgotten, as he eagerly cried: "Mr. Banks, do you know me? Do you know me?" I was happy to tell him that I knew him, and happier still to listen to his happy story of the joyous home life they were having together under the pleasant surroundings that had come to them.

Five years passed away, and I heard nothing further of my young friend. I had myself removed to a distant city where, as pastor of a large church, with many outside engagements, I had enough to occupy my mind; but ever and anon I would think of my little boy in the dry-goods box and wonder what the future had in store for him. About this time I had an engagement to lecture in a Western town of several thousand inhabitants. So far as I knew I was



not personally acquainted with anyone in the town. The arrangements for the lecture had been made by a committee, and my only personal interest in it was to go and deliver my message and come away. I arrived in town late in the evening, my train being delayed, and hurried directly from the station to the hall. There was a large audience, and at its close a number of people came up to make themselves known to me and to shake hands. They were all strangers, and while I was shaking hands with them I suddenly became interested in a very peculiar circumstance. I can't remember just how it began, but all at once I knew that a woman had one of my hands in both of hers, and a man had the other hand in both of his. The man's eyes were full of tears, and tears were freely raining down the woman's face. Just then she lifted the hand she held to her lips and kissed it reverently. I was utterly dumbfounded, not knowing

what it could mean, when suddenly lifting my eyes from them I looked into the eyes of a young fellow over six feet tall. His eyes were shining with tears, too, but his younger face was all aglow with excited joy. In a moment the meaning of it all flashed over me. It was my boy of the dry-goods box. That wonderful head of curling hair, that gloriously chiseled face, those great dark eyes—they never could belong to but one person whom I had ever seen. As the meaning of it all burned into my brain my own heart broke with happy tenderness and I furnished my part of the tears.

I was to stay over night at the hotel, and after a little talk with the father and mother I took the young fellow with me to my room and talked with him till past midnight. I found that the family had gone back to their old home surroundings and were very comfortably situated. The boy had managed to

secure a very good education, and though not yet seventeen, he was one of the secretaries of the Young Men's Christian Association in an important town, and it was his hope and purpose to prepare himself for the Christian ministry and give his life to the winning of souls to Christ.

The next morning, having a little time on my hands, I took occasion to find out how the boy was regarded in the town; and from all quarters I learned, what I was ready to believe from my intercourse with him the night before, that he was a young man of remarkable influence for good, and in the church which he attended, in his Bible class, and among the men whom he met in the Association work, he was everywhere regarded as a noble example of consecrated Christian manhood.

As the train carried me away toward my home my heart was full of happy thanksgiving to God. I said to myself

over and over again, "No one pays like God." For where could there have been so small an investment that could have yielded back so large a return? Surely for either the minister or the layman there is no gold mine so rich in possibilities as that of soul-winning.

CHAPTER XIII  
WAYSIDE CONVERSIONS



## CHAPTER XIII.

**T**HAT which adds romantic interest to the life of every earnest worker for Christ is the opportunity which ever and anon presents itself to win souls. Suddenly, without any expectation or preparation, there springs up from the roadside of life one of the rarest privileges in all one's experience. It was so in the life of Jesus. He went walking by the seaside and found the two young men mending their nets. He had a little talk with them, saw the time to win them, and led them away after him forever. Going down the street he sees a young tax-gatherer at his desk. He knows that this young man is restless and uneasy, and that now is the time to win him to better things. Christ steps across the

street, has a little talk with him, and when it is over Matthew closes up his business, and the next we hear of him he is giving a dinner in honor of Jesus.

The life of Jesus was full of such experiences. It was at the close of a weary and dusty day that he was waiting outside of Samaria when the sinful woman came with her water-pot, and through the simple incident of asking for a drink of water Christ got hold of her heart and not only won her to himself, but also won a great multitude in that town. Now we are to be like our Lord. Our lives may be romantic and abound in these unique and beautiful victories if, like Jesus, we are ever on the alert to seize hold of the passing opportunity. I remember well one morning in a certain city where I was pastor and was in the midst of a great revival. Every day I was preparing a sermon for delivery the same evening, and God was greatly blessing the work. Many people were



being converted. One morning while I was in my study preparing the sermon for that night's meeting my wife came to the study and told me that a messenger had come from a family whose name was entirely unknown to me, asking if I could go to the house to see a young woman who was sick. I sent word that I would go a little later in the morning, and went back to my sermon. When the sermon was completed I went to make the visit.

Arriving at the home I found that none of the family were members of any church, and though some of them had been to hear me preach I had up to this time had no knowledge of them whatever. The young woman who had sent for me was about twenty years old and was very ill with consumption. It was evident that she would never leave her room again until she left it for the grave. She had been shut in there, sick, for five months, and though none of the rest of

the family were Christians, she had in some way that I do not now remember found the Lord.

I was met at the door by the mother and ushered into a very pleasant room. I sat for a while at the bedside of the young lady and talked with her and the mother, first about the bright day, about the sunshine coming into the sick room, and such commonplace matters, until, incidentally, I turned to the mother and asked her if she was a Christian. She replied that she was not. I found, however, that she had been hopefully converted when she was a young girl living on a farm in Pennsylvania, but for some reason she had not joined the church, and as is very usual in cases where people try to live a Christian life outside of the church, she had failed, and now for many years had lived an entirely worldly life. She said she had wholly given up the idea that she would ever be a Christian; that she had remarked only the other day to

a friend that she was certain if she were to die she would be lost, and that she sometimes thought the day of grace had passed for her.

You may well imagine that by this time I was thoroughly aroused. It seemed to me an awful thing to look upon that sick young woman who was only waiting there for the angel of death in the presence of a mother who could not enter into any spiritual fellowship or communion with her; and so, with my heart uplifted to God, I set myself deliberately to win the mother to Christ then and there. I urged what God says in his book—that he is *married* to the backslider. I tried to make her see the providential opportunity which was here presented for her to renew her covenant of grace with the Lord.

She was so unresponsive at first that, after talking with her ten or fifteen minutes, I came to the very edge of giving up. How many times we fail that way

when we are on the very verge of success. I honestly believe that more preachers fail of being successful evangelists and soul-winners in their pastorates because they give way too quick, both in the following up a public appeal and in persistently pursuing a private conversation, than for any other one reason. But as I was just about to give up, the thought suddenly possessed me that perhaps this was the woman's last call—if I could not win her there beside her daughter's sick bed what hope was there that any one could ever win her? This thought gave me new energy, and I pursued the conversation not only with unabated but with increased resolution. The result was that at the close of a half-hour her heart was broken with deep conviction, and, sobbing and crying out to God for mercy, she knelt with me beside her daughter's bed, and while I prayed for her she gave herself unreservedly up to God,

and found forgiveness and peace in Christ.

A few moments after we had risen from our knees the mother went and called in her sister, who was visiting her from her old home in Pennsylvania, and a younger daughter, thirteen years of age. Then as the mother went away from the room again for a moment, the daughter looked into my face, and with a radiance like that which shone in the face of Saint Stephen when his murderers bore testimony that it was as "the face of an angel," she said, "Oh, isn't this glorious! I have been lying here praying for this, night and day, for so many weeks." Thus I had a vision, a revelation, and I knew it was in answer to this daughter's prayers that salvation was come to this house.

But the story is not yet complete. I turned around from the bedside to see standing there the aunt, whose face was red with weeping, and I said to her,

“Are you a Christian?” And she answered, “No.” And then I entered upon a new conversation. She frankly confessed that she had long desired to be a Christian, but there were so many things in the way—idols, she said, that she could never give up. But, making little of these things, I began to tell her the story of her sister’s conversion before she had come into the room, and while I was telling her that story, and she was listening with great astonishment and evident emotion, the sister herself re-entered the room and came up and kissed her, and they sat and cried together.

Leaving the two women together for a moment, feeling sure the problem would work itself out best that way, I turned my attention to the little girl, a beautiful child of thirteen, and I saw by her eyes that the battle was won there before I began. Her heart opened to the Saviour as naturally as a flower

opens to the sun on a summer's morning. Then we had another season of prayer, the aunt and the young girl praying for themselves, and the mother and the sick daughter and myself pleading with God for them, until they came to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and to rejoice in their faith in him.

I was an hour and a quarter in that house. I had never been in it before; though two of them had heard me preach. I had never even known their names or had any personal communication with them whatever. In that hour and a quarter, through God's great grace and mercy, three souls had turned away from sin and had found peace in trusting the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. What a blessed wayside opportunity was that! But to take advantage of such opportunities we must live in the spirit of them. If I had been in a cold and heavy mood, and had gone to do my work in a spirit of formality, I could have visited that

sick girl and gone away and done nothing else for that house. And yet those souls were waiting for somebody to capture them for the divine Lord. We need to be on the alert for the wayside opportunities.



CHAPTER XIV  
THE RAILROAD REVIVAL



## CHAPTER XIV.

SOME years ago I was pastor in a large city which is a great railroad center. Tens of thousands of railroad men have their homes there and live either in the city or its suburbs. This fact impressed me on my first arrival, and as the months went on it became more and more apparent to my mind that the church was not sufficiently awake to the spiritual needs of this large and intelligent class of men. I set myself to work to devise some way of getting at the situation. Whatever measure of success may have come to me in the course of my ministry has been largely due to the fact that I have always tried to work as faithfully and with as much devotion as the most successful business man works. So I set myself

to work to find a plan for calling the attention of these railroad men to Christ and the Gospel.

After some weeks of thought and prayer I decided to have a series of revival meetings to which railroad men should be specially invited and in which sermons and prayers and everything should bear upon railroad men. I had printed many thousands of invitations specially addressed to railroad men. In these I stated in a frank and brotherly way my desire to preach the Gospel to railroad men and their families and the welcome they would receive at my church. These invitations I carried to all the great centers of railroad employment, and had them given out in all the great freight depots and shops in the city.

The success of the movement in attracting the attention of railroad employees far exceeded my expectations from the very start. Railroad men flocked to the services and some were

converted the very first evenings. But these men told of others who would not come with them, and wished they had some way of getting the Gospel to them where they worked. I caught at this suggestion at once, and visited the railroad managers and superintendents and secured the privilege of speaking for twenty minutes of the noon hour in any of the shops or round-houses of the city. Then for over a month I went every week-day at noon to some great freight depot, or round-house, or workshop to hold service. Some men were converted in these meetings at noon, but the far greater result came from getting a hold upon men who were indifferent or prejudiced, and who followed us back to the service at night.

When my strength began to weaken I secured the help of two faithful Christian women who had been successful in working with railroad men, and they would give Bible readings which I would

follow at each service with special exhortation and invitation to accept Christ. I have never known so many railroad men to be converted in any one meeting. Baggage-men, expressmen, telegraphers, brakemen, freight-handlers, all had their representatives, and their wives and children came with them. Over two hundred and fifty united with the church of which I was pastor, and many found homes in other churches.

Of course all were not railroad men who were brought under the influence of this revival and through God's grace were saved. Naturally these railroad men had friends and neighbors, and when they began to be interested in the meetings they talked about them among their friends, and they came, too, and many of them were saved. I shall never forget some interesting and striking cases developed in that meeting. One night I found at the altar a middle-aged man in great sorrow. He was

sobbing with grief, and the great depths of his soul seemed to be broken up, and yet he found no peace. I talked with him and finally asked him why he did not accept Christ's promise outright and have peace. He said, "I cannot." I asked him then why he came to the altar at all, that the invitation was only for those who would accept Jesus. His reply was that he could not stay away. His sense of sin was so keen, and the burden of guilt upon his soul so pressed him down, that when the invitation was given for sinners to come he could not stay in his seat.

I continued to press him to be frank with me, until finally he told me all. He said that he worked in a brewery, and had been working in a brewery ever since he was a boy. He had a wife and six children depending on him for support. He felt that it was a wicked business and that he could not be a Christian and continue in it, and yet he

did not know anything else, and if he gave it up his family would starve. The man was very anxious; the great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. It was the awful problem of his life. I urged that it was his business to accept Christ as his Saviour, to do the right thing and leave the result to God. I assured him that God would not let a man starve through doing right. I specially pushed home on him that passage where Christ says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He was a strong man, a solid stanch German, and decision came slowly. But when it did come, it was all over. His face was transformed, and everybody around him knew that he had gained a victory over himself and his sin, and that Jesus Christ had made the conquest of his soul. He left the brewery the next day. In two weeks I found him a good position, and



before I left the city he was earning a much larger salary than he had ever earned before, and he and his family were very happy in the church.

I well remember another evening, when, as I was passing around through the rear of the congregation while the after-meeting was going on at the altar, I came across a young lady who seemed the very picture of despair. She had an intelligent keen face, but the inner agony was written all over it. I stopped to talk with her, and after a little she admitted that she was deeply affected by the service and was sorely conscience-stricken. But she said, "I can't be a Christian."

"Why?" I asked.

"Not because I do not want to," she said, "but because I have become so entangled with worldly and sinful things that there is no way out. God knows I would give my life to be clear of them, but I can't get out! I can't get out!"

These last phrases she fairly moaned from her lips like a wail of despair.

I talked with her until I saw that no further advantage could be gained by conversation there, and then arranged for her to come and see me the next day. Then she told me her story. It was a sad story of misfortune and sin and death on the part of others, which had at last thrown the burden of an invalid mother and little brothers and sisters upon shoulders unable to bear so heavy a load, and she was working now as an acrobat in some low entertainment hall in the city. I urged her, as I had the man from the brewery, that it was God's world, and that one could do right in it and trust him for the result. She went away sad, but promised to come to the evening meeting. That afternoon I went to see a noble Christian woman, a woman of wealth and high social position, but who was also rich in human sympathy and love. I told

her the story of this poor girl, and, as I had expected, she was immediately awake to the situation and was ready to be her friend. That night I introduced them, and from that hour they were sisters. The poor girl who had lost all hope became a happy Christian, and through her rich blessings, both temporal and spiritual, found their way to all the unfortunate family.

One interesting feature of this revival was that its advertised purpose to reach railroad men attracted wide attention, and a number of traveling railroad men having a night in the city came to the meetings, and several such were converted. These carried the fire-brands into different parts of the country, so that in my travels during years since I have had strangers speak to me in regard to blessings received at that meeting more frequently than concerning any other revival it has been my privilege to lead.



CHAPTER XV  
ON THE TRAIL OF A SOUL



## CHAPTER XV.

I SHALL never forget a lowering morning, years ago, when I went into the pulpit of a large city church of which I was pastor, depressed by the unusual gloom of the day. One of the hardest burdens I have had to carry in my ministry is bad weather on Sunday. It was not really storming on this Sunday morning, but it was cold and raw, and the air was so heavy that it seemed to weigh one down.

The first thing that started me out of my depression after I had entered the pulpit was the face of one of the most striking looking men I have ever seen. It was not only that it was a new face, but that there was something about the eyes and the whole look of the man which aroused me. My depression was for-

gotten; for me there was only one man in that congregation, and he was that stranger. I remember well the theme that morning. It was the cowardice of Aaron, and his poor, weak, shifty lie to Moses when the stronger brother demanded of the weaker one the story of the golden calf. The lesson which I drew out of it that day, and which I crowded home on the people with all the power that was in me, was that we were responsible for letting things take their own course and go wrong; that we had no right to go on permitting our friends and our circumstances in social and business relations to carry us away from God.

I say I crowded this message home on the people, but as a matter of fact, so far as I was personally conscious, I only pressed it home on one man. I had scarcely opened my theme and gotten on fire with it before I detected his interest and was sure that he winced under



the application of the truth to himself. During the singing of the last hymn I mentally determined that I would introduce myself to him at the close of the service and find out who he was. But "man proposes and God disposes." I had scarcely pronounced the benediction before my man and his wife had slipped down the aisle and were gone.

I immediately sought to know who he was, and learned that he was one of the wealthiest business men in the city, a man of reserved temperament, who lived in a great mansion in one of the most fashionable suburbs. I confess I was greatly disappointed to hear all this. As a matter of theory I believed that God was as interested in rich men as in poor ones and that Jesus Christ was as able to save this man as he would be if he were some struggling lawyer or clerk. But as a matter of fact I had had a good deal more experience with the other class, and my optimism and enthusiasm

in regard to being able to follow up my message for the man's help and comfort had received a great check.

I went on with the other duties of the day, but during the Sunday-school and all the afternoon ever and anon my stranger of the morning would come back and look up at me with those piercing but anxious eyes through which God had let me have a look into his conscience until I could read his soul. Somehow I knew this man was not a Christian. I felt as sure as I could be that he had been greatly convicted of sin under the sermon of the morning, and more and more I felt that I had no right to leave it where it was.

I had a very uncomfortable afternoon. On one hand something said to me, "You will spoil everything if you follow this man up. If the Holy Spirit used your message for his good this morning, you should be grateful. But he would no doubt resent anything you could say if

you were to go and visit him personally.” On the other hand something else said, “God used you to carry his message to this man’s conscience. Just as surely as Peter saw the poor crippled man and his conviction, you saw this man dumb before God’s word. Perhaps no other man will ever have so good a chance to win this man’s soul as you have now. Perhaps, just because he is rich and prosperous, preachers are afraid of him. If you let him alone for a few days, he may be harder than ever. What are you a preacher for if not to follow up God’s message when you see that it has gone home?” On the whole, I was greatly worried. I awoke several times in the night, and every time I saw that stranger’s face and looked into those haunting eyes.

Monday morning came, and yet I was uncertain what I ought to do. The hard nerve-giving of Sunday always leaves even the strongest preacher who

is of a nervous temperament a little on the ragged edge on Monday morning,' and so the objections to going to see this man at his house seemed multiplied on Monday, though throughout the forenoon, again and again, his face came back to me, and I felt that I should always have a sense of defeat and failure unless I sought personally to press God's message home upon his soul.

At lunch I spoke to my wife about it, and told her how I was haunted by the man's face. I also told of what I had learned of his wealth, and the style in which he lived, and of my fear that he would resent being followed up. I remarked that perhaps if I let him alone he would come again, while if I followed him up now I might lose him altogether. I think if she had sided with this view I would have settled down quite content that it was right. But, to my surprise, she was dead against it. She urged that I had better go at once and see him;

that the whole matter seemed providential, and at the worst it could do no harm to let the man know that I was interested in him. I was not at all pleased to have her take this view, but having asked her advice I was bound to take it seriously into consideration.

The result was that a little after two o'clock that Monday afternoon, in a pouring rain, I hired a closed carriage, took my wife with me, and we drove some three miles into the country suburb where stood the mansion of the man who had been to hear me preach the morning before. When we arrived at the gate, we decided that it was best for me to go in alone, so that I might have a freer chance to approach him as to his personal religion. I never did anything so diffidently in my life. I fairly trembled as I went up the walk. I rang the bell in fear. A servant came and ushered me into the parlor. A little later the door opened at the farther end of the

room, and through it came my stranger of yesterday. When he saw me a startled look went over his face. He came forward and took my hand in a long grasp as he said, "This is a strange thing. I have been thinking of you ever since I heard you preach yesterday morning. I thought of driving in again last night, but I have not been well, and my wife feared for me to do it. To-day I have thought of going to see you, but the storm kept me back. How did you happen to come to see me through all this rain?"

Then I just opened my heart to him and told him the whole story which I have tried to tell you; only in this case we were two men sitting close together with our eyes on each other's faces and our hearts greatly moved. He told me that the sermon the day before had seemed to be God's message to him, and that he felt greatly condemned that he had so long neglected making an open surrender of himself to Jesus Christ.

After we had talked awhile, I asked him if I might pray with him, and he said it would be a great comfort to him and he would like his wife to be present. He went out and brought her in and introduced her, repeated to her something of the conversation, and then I prayed with them. The Holy Spirit was present in that room during that prayer. Our hearts were strangely warmed.

When we arose from our knees I shall never forget the face or words of my new friend. His face was bathed in tears; his eyes shone with a new light; he grasped me by the hand and exclaimed, "I thank you with all my heart. You are the first man in twenty-five years who has ever asked me about my soul or asked permission to pray in my house."

That prayer and conversation marked the beginning of a new Christian life in that household.





CHAPTER XVI  
A WAYSIDE CAPTURE



## CHAPTER XVI.

I WAS once a pastor in a part of an Eastern city where there were a number of large manufacturing plants, many of them employing several hundred and some of them as many as a thousand young men or women, or both. I was trying the experiment of a special series of services to young people for Sunday evenings, with a view to securing conversions in the after-service which followed each sermon. I was very desirous of reaching these young working people, and finally concluded that the best way to do it was to go directly to them myself with the cards of invitation. So, with a great bag of these cards, giving the themes and dates of the series of sermons and a kindly-worded invitation, I presented myself day

after day at the noon hour beside the gate of one manufacturing plant after another, and handed one of these invitations to each person coming out or going in. Sometimes they were thrown away, on rare occasions they were resented; but for the most part they were received kindly, and my church was crowded to standing room by the young people who responded to the invitations.

One day while I was making these rounds I took my stand before a factory employing several hundred young boys and girls. I was a few minutes early, and while I waited I saw one of the vilest specimens of humanity come up on the other side of the door from me, bowed down with a huge load of cheap sensational literature which he was hired to give out to these people. He was a wretched-looking creature. He was ragged and dirty; his face was seamed and bloated with vice, and the stuff he had to dispense was as vile as he was. He

laid down his burden and looked up at me with a leer and a grin as much as to say, "We are a pair. There are two of us." I confess I felt shaky. I never in my life felt so like running under fire. At first thought there was something so repulsive about the idea of entering into a competition with a fellow like that that it seemed the best thing I could do would be to slip away home. But that lasted only for a moment. Then I said to myself, "This is as it should be. This only shows the competition that is going on everywhere for every human soul. This man is the proper type of the devil whose servant he is. He is here to work for his master. He is trying to win these souls to the devil. I am trying to win them for Christ. I want to do them good, to draw them upward, and make them stronger and purer in every way. I will not run. I will stand here and compete in my Master's name, and for his sake, for the soul of every boy and

girl in this shop." And so I never enjoyed giving out cards so much as I did that day when that sense of the competition which is going on for every human soul was so keenly felt by me.

But I was not the only one that day who had noticed the seeming incongruity of the pastor of a big city church and a notorious drunken man standing side by side at a factory door giving out their literature to the workmen. Just across the street, waiting, like a spider for a fly, was a liquor-saloon watching there for any wayward boy or girl who might be drawn into its net. Lounging around the door were a number of fellows who had visited inside too often for their own good, and who were alert for anything that would start a laugh. One of these noticed the giving out of the literature over the way, and with an oath swore that that beat anything he ever saw, and then he pointed out the preacher and his associate. It raised a

laugh. They went inside and called out the bar-tender and some other half-drunken fellows to enjoy the joke with them. I heard the hilarity and imagined the cause of it, but paid no attention to it, except that after I had gotten through with the factory people I went across the street and, speaking pleasantly to them, handed every one of the loungers one of the invitations and told them I would be very glad indeed to welcome them the next Sunday night at my church. Some laughed and looked sheepish; one man swore he had no use for churches, and others simply looked at me dumbly and curiously and said nothing.

Sitting there, lounging back against the wall of the saloon that day, was a man who had had a great deal of trouble and misfortune. He was a big, broad-shouldered, strong fellow, physically, and with many good qualities. But his wife had been ill for a long time in a sanitarium,

and his little children had had poor care, and he had drifted into drink, trying as so many thousands have done to drown his sorrow and still the aching of his heart over the wreckage of what had promised to be a happy home. He sat there, listening to the rough fun, while I was giving out my cards across the street. He was about half drunk, and so did not pay much attention to it until I came across and spoke to them. I had noticed him particularly, for there was something in his big figure and in his large fine eyes that told of the splendid man he might be. And when I had said I would be glad to welcome them at my church I had looked straight into his eyes.

After I had gone on one of them began to curse and abuse me behind my back. He declared it was an insult for me to go around shoving my religion under people's noses and that I was only doing it because I was paid for it. But my big drayman was sobering up. My eyes



had appealed to his, and the warm pressure of the hand I had given him and the card of invitation I had left in his hand were having their effect, and he at once began to defend me. He said, "That is not true. He is not paid for doing this. His church would pay him just as much as if he did not do it. Some of them would like him better if he did not do it. He could be at home reading in his library just as well as not; but he came down here, and stood over there beside that drunken scoundrel, and gave out those cards while we were poking fun at him, and then he came over here and shook hands with us when I am sure he knew we had been laughing at him, not because he is paid for it, but because he wanted to help us and do us good. You fellows can go on drinking and doing just as you please, but I am going to accept the preacher's invitation, and I am going to take this card with me, and go up there to-morrow night and tell him

I have come to see what he can do for me."

I have given the substance of that conversation as my drayman gave it to me afterward. Sunday night he was on hand. I was shaking hands at the door when he came in. I knew him the moment I got my eyes on him, and as I shook hands with him I said, "I am so glad that you have come." He was much pleased to think I remembered and told me he had accepted my invitation, and if the church could do him any good he would be glad of it.

I do not remember what the sermon was about that night, except that it was about Jesus, and in the after-service the big drayman stood up and asked to be prayed for, and humbly and tearfully gave his heart to Christ. He became a very useful Christian. For my own personal comfort it was one of the happiest captures God has ever helped me to make.

Everything seemed to blossom for him after that day. His business prospered. His wife, concerning whom it had been feared that she was permanently ill mentally, recovered and came home to her family. It became a most beautiful Christian home. I have never gone near that city since to preach, week-night or Sunday, but that before the sermon began, sitting somewhere in the audience, I have looked into the eyes of my big drayman. God paid me better than I knew that day. I was competing for some of the souls inside the shop and he gave me some of them; but the most royal capture of all was across the street among that crowd of drunken loungers.

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